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NOTES  
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POETICAL SELECTIONS  
1930

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# Lord Byron (1788-1824)

**Life and Works of Byron**—George Gordon Byron was born in London on January 22, 1788. His father died in France when he was only three years old. Byron had a half-sister, Augusta, a daughter of his father's previous marriage, to whom he became attached early. His mother was a Scotch lady of a hysterical temper, and her influence went more to spoil the child than to rear him up properly. She was over-indulgent and stern alternately to her boy. At 10 years of age, his grand uncle dying, the future poet became Lord Byron and the owner of Newstead Abbey, in Nottinghamshire. At the age of 13, he went to Harrow where he was not very popular and did not seem to attend to the school routine. However, his reading was of an extensive and desultory character. He had nothing but distaste for all that was taught at the school. He afterwards went to Trinity College, Cambridge. He did not give himself up much to study, but led a very dissipated life.

We shall have to note here two incidents that coloured his future life. They were (a) first, his unrequited love for Miss Chaworth, which continued to burn in his heart till his death, and (b) secondly, the publication of his first volume of poems which were very unfavourably criticised and provoked a reply from Byron in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." He now left England with very unpleasant memories, for a prolonged journey on the continent of Europe. He was accompanied by his friend John Cam Hobhouse. They first went to Lisbon, travelled through part of Portugal and Spain till they reached Gibraltar whence they sailed for Malta and the coast of Albania. Subsequently, they journeyed through Epirus and Acarnania and thence to Athens. After spending a long time at Athens, they started for Smyrna and Constantinople. Here his friend parted with him and returned to England, but Byron prolonged his stay in Greece for two years more and returned to England in 1811. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* which appeared in February, 1812, are the outcome of his continental journeyings.

*Byron awoke one morning and found himself famous* and his poem became the craze of the public. He became the lion of society. He once more threw himself into dissipation. On the 2nd of January, 1815, he was married to Miss Milbanke. Soon he perceived that his marriage was a mistake. The lady did not seem to take very kindly to him; they lived happily for six months and at the end of a year their wedded life was at an end, for his wife left him never to return. The whole blame was laid upon Byron by English society. His enemies now turned upon him. He soon found himself an outcast from society. On the 20th of April, 1816, he again left England. He first went to Brussels and then to Switzerland where he established himself in a summer villa on the shores of the lake Geneva. Shelley was living not far from him. The two poets came together. This period in Byron's life was marked by great literary activity. Byron was joined by his fellow-traveller Hobhouse again and they both crossed over to Italy and proceeded to Venice. This journey has been embodied in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*. He subsequently visited Ravenna, Pisa and Genoa and resided in Italy till the middle of 1823. It was on the eve of the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence that Byron, who always sympathised with the Greek aspiration for freedom, sailed for Greece. He arrived at Mesolonghi in the middle of Jan. 1824. Before he could take part seriously in the liberation of the Greeks, he was carried off by fever at Mesolonghi on the 18th of April, 1824. At the time of his death he was only thirty-six years of age.

### Byron's principal works.

- (1) *Hours of Idleness* (1807)
- (2) *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1808)
- (3) *First two cantos of Childe Harold* (1812)
- (4) *Giaour and Bride of Abydos* (1813)
- (5) *Corsair, Lara and Hebrew Melodies* (1814).
- (6) *Siege of Corinth and Parisina* (1815)
- (7) *Third canto of Childe Harold* (1816)

(8) *The Dream and Darkness* (written immediately after his separation with his wife).

(9) *Manfred, Cain, Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus* (mainly dramas) 1816—1823.

(10) *Don Juan*. 1816—1823.

**Literary Estimate**—At one time Byron was unduly admired and almost idolised; his poetry was all the rage then in Europe. A reaction soon set in against this excess of adoration; and there are now men who refuse to see any merit in Byron's poetry. It is true that Byron has serious faults that will always tell against his poetic fame. His slovenliness of composition, his cheap rhetoric, his gross errors of taste are obvious enough. We should confess that Byron was not an artist like Milton or Pope or Tennyson. In his early poetry there is much that is commonplace and tawdry, but after 1816, the era of his exile, his style steadily improves, and the various sides of the man, his wit, his fancy, his passion for beauty, his graphic realism find their fullest expression in his poetry.

We may note the following characteristics of Byron:—

(1) *His breadth and vigour of imagination*. It is nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in *his description of nature*. With his love of nature there is associated no meditative musing and little sense of mystery, but about his real enthusiasm for it there can be no mistake. His imagination seizes upon and reproduces with admirable fidelity the general features of nature rather than its details. He often treats nature as a background to human activities.

(2) *His masterful personality*. The wonderful personality of Byron covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects. It has been described by Goethe as the "dash, daring and grandiosity" of Byron, and has expressed itself, as Swinburne thinks, in the excellence of sincerity and strength. Byron has often been charged with pose or insincerity. His insincerity is of the surface, and his pose is meant for those who admire or curse him from a distance. The real Byron has no pose or insincerity. His sincerity is nowhere better exemplified than in his hard fight against social cant and hypocrisy, and the literary affectations of the age.

## THE ISLES OF GREECE

**Context and Occasion.**—The impassioned Ode—*The Isles of Greece*, occurs in the third canto of *Don Juan*. "The scene is, the island of Lambro, the Corsair (*i.e.*, pirate). His daughter Haidee and Juan (Haidee's lover), in the continued absence of the chief, and believing at last that he is dead, make free use of all the pirate's wealth, and are holding high revel when he, unknown to them, returns, and gazes with wondering eyes on the scenes of unwonted revelry. The feast is over, and the Greek poet of the pirate's island sings the lofty strain which was at the time undoubtedly the expression of Byron's deepest and truest thoughts—"The Isles of Greece." Then he laughs at himself and at poetic glory in general, and so is led to discuss contemporary aspirants to poetic fame. This he does in verses which are amusing, though abusive. Thereafter follow the beautiful verses on Evening. And all this while Lambro is waiting to break in on the unsuspecting pair!"

**Central Thought.**—Greece is still a lovely land of bright sunshine but she has lost all her glories. *Nature is still fair in Greece but Man has degenerated.* The hero's harp, the lover's lute are silent. The memory of Marathon is now grown dim like a dream dreamt long ago; "the heroic lay is tuneless now—the heroic bosom beats no more." What is the use of weeping over days more blest? If the Greeks would but revive the old heroic spirit, they would surely be free. But no! *the modern Greeks seem to care less for freedom than for pleasure.* The Greeks cannot expect any help from the French. They must trust to their own strength of arms, and to their own resources, if they want to regain freedom. Finding, however, no response from the Greeks to his stirring appeal, the poet refuses to have anything to do with them.

**Critical Remarks.**—We have already noted the chief features of Byron's poetry, and in that connection we touched on his *passionate love of freedom*. It is Greece, and Greece in bondage to an alien power, that is Byron's subject here. The skies are still blue, the groves still sweet, the green beauties of Attic plain are still there. Thermopylæ and Marathon still remain to charm and stir the heart—but the Greek people, how changed and degraded!

People often fail to notice a *veiled personal allusion* in the last line of this Ode, and we should like to quote here the very apt remarks of Mazzini: "The crowd do not comprehend him; they listen, fascinated for an instant; then repent, and avenge their momentary transport by calumniating and insulting the poet. His intuition of the death of a form of society they call wounded self-love; his sorrow for all is misinterpreted as cowardly egotism. They credit not the traces of profound suffering revealed by his lineaments; they credit not the presentiment of a new life which from time to time escapes his trembling lips; they believe not in the despairing embrace in which he grasps the material universe—stars, lakes, Alps, and sea—and identifies himself with it, and through it with God, of whom—to him at least—it is a symbol. They do, however, take careful count of some unhappy moments in which, wearied out by the emptiness of life, he has raised—with remorse I am sure—the cup of ignoble pleasures to his lips, believing he might find forgetfulness there. How many times have not his accusers drained this cup, without redeeming the sin by a single virtue: without—I will not say bearing—but without having even the capacity of appreciating the burden which weighed on Byron! *And did he (Byron) not himself dash into fragments the ignoble cup,* so soon as he beheld something worthy of the devotion of his life!"

**Metre and Versification.**—The poem is written in *Iambic tetrameter* (*i. e.*, a line of four iambic feet). It ought to be noted that Byron uses here a six-lined stanza instead of the decasyllabic octave (*i. e.*, a stanza of eight lines, each of five iambic feet) in which the whole of *Don Juan* is composed. The rhyme-scheme is *ab ab cc*. We can notice here a few variations:

- (a) Substitution of a trochee.

Tru'st not | for fre'e | dom to' | the Fra'nks

- (b) Substitution of a spondee (a foot of two accented syllables).

Ha'rk! ri | sing to' | the ig | no'ble ca'll |



**Analysis.**

- (1) The past glories of Greece that were attained—
    - (a) in the sphere of literature and arts; (stanzas 1—2)
    - (b) on the battle-field of Marathon. (stanzas 3—4)
  - (2) Hope inspired by the memory of these glories. (stanza 4)
  - (3) Present degradation of Greece evident in the decay of literature and of heroic patriotic spirit.
  - (4) The poet's feeling of shame and appeal to his countrymen who make no response. (stanzas 6—8)
  - (5) Their love of pleasures and their preference of the Pyrrhic dance to the Pyrrhic phalanx is reproved. (stanzas 9—10)
  - (6) The rule of a Greek tyrant in ancient days—a far more desirable position than the alien (*i.e.*, foreign) rule of the Turks. (stanzas 11—12)
  - (7) The survival of the Spartan spirit in the Albanians ought to be a lesson to the Greeks. (stanzas 13—14)
- The Greeks must depend upon their own efforts for the attainment of freedom.
- (8) Conclusion—The poet's feeling of sorrow and his desire to retire to the top of Sunium. (stanzas 15—16)

*Note that Byron puts the whole of the poem 'The Isles of Greece' in the mouth of a patriotic Greek poet who is lamenting the degradation of Greece and her subjection to the rule of the Turk. Of course the sentiments of the supposed Greek poet are the sentiments of Byron himself.*

**St. 1. Substance.**—[Addressing the Isles of Greece, Byron recalls the past glory of Greece, and laments that that glory is now no more]

**Paraphrase.**—The isles of Greece! Oh how sad it is to remember, that here once Sappho, consumed with the passion of love expressed her love in exquisite lyrics, and here the arts of war and peace were developed, and here Delos rose out of the sea, and Apollo was born! Greece is still the land of eternal sunshine, but all her glories, except her natural beauty, are departed.

*The isles of Greece*—Byron may be thinking of the group of islands in the Ægean Sea, which form a part of Greece. It should also be noted that Greece consists, not only of the main land at the extremity of the Balkan Peninsula, but of numerous islands—Eubæa and Northern Sporades on N.E., Cyclades on S. E., Cerigo on S., Ionian islands on W. The Ode is a stirring call to the degenerate Greeks. By dwelling upon their past glories, it seeks to rouse in their hearts a passionate desire for freedom. *Burning*—consumed with the passion of love. It refers both to her love and to the intensity of feeling in her love lyrics. *Sappho*—a native of Mytilene, or as some say, of Eresos in Lesbos. Little is known of her life, and the story commonly accepted that she fell in love with Phaon, and finding her love unreturned, she leapt down from the Leucadian rock, is now generally discredited. Fragments of her lyric poems are extant, of which the most important is an ode to Aphrodite. A new ode of Sappho was discovered and published by Grenfell and Hunt in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (1898). *Sung*—This of course refers to her lyric poems. She was the greatest lyric poet of ancient Greece. Her existing fragments show a marvellous combination of sound and sense, a perfect knowledge of technique, and extra-ordinary power of passionate description. *Where burning.....sun—i. e.*, which were once eloquent with the music of Sappho. *The arts of war and peace*—the arts of peace such as sculpture, architecture and painting. From what survives of the architecture and sculpture, it can be conjectured with some degree of certainty to what heights of perfection Greek art developed in these two branches, but the remains of Greek painting give us no adequate idea of what was the degree of development in that art. The art of war, *i. e.*, skill in warfare; Greece is remarkable for having early developed the peaceful arts as well as a high degree of efficiency in war. *Delos*—the smallest of the group of islands called the Cyclades, in the Ægean Sea. It was called out of the deep by the trident of the god Poseidon, and subsequently it was fixed to the bottom of the sea by Zeus with adamant chains, (so that on it Latona might safely give birth to her twins, Apollo, and Artemis. Afterwards it became the holy seat of the worship of Apollo.) *Phæbus*—Apollo, the sun-god. (The word means *bright* or *pure*. Byron may have particularly thought of Apollo either in connection with the islands of Delos, or because he is the god of

music and poetry.) *Röse*—refers to the rising of Delos out of the water. *Sprung*—was born. *Where Delos.....sprung*—Byron means that the birth of the god Apollo in one of the islands of Greece surely made it glorious. *Eternal summer*—Greece is a land of bright sunshine as contrasted with the cold, and dark fog of the North (*i. e.*, northern Europe). *Gilds*—tinges with the golden sunshine. *But all*—*i. e.*, her past glory. *Except...sun*—except the sun that shines as gloriously as ever. *Is set*—had departed. *Eternal summer.....set*—This idea is elaborated by Byron thus in *Childe Harold* Canto II ;—

“Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild ;  
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,  
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds;  
Still in this beam Mendel's marbles glare ;  
*Art, glory, freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.*”

**St. 2. Substance.**—[Both heroic and lyric poetry, neglected in their own birth-place (Greece), are admired in other countries. Greece alone is silent while the countries far west have caught distant echoes of her poetry.]

**Paraphrase.**—The heroic poetry of Chios and the lyric poetry of Teos,—the one associated with the harp and the other with the lute,—have elsewhere received the recognition which your country (Greece) refuses. Greece, the land of their birth, is alone silent to the music that resounds in countries farther west than the islands of the Blest, which your ancestors believed to be in the extreme west of the world.

*Scian*—It comes from Chios (originally *Scio*). Chios is one of the largest and most famous islands of the *Ægean*, on the coast of *Ionian*, and was considered by the ancients to have the best claim to be the birth-place of Homer. *The Scian muse*—will consequently mean ‘the poetry of Homer’. *Teian*—It comes from Teos, one of the *Ionian* cities, on the coast of *Asia Minor*, celebrated as the birth-place of the lyric poet *Anacreon*. ‘The *Teian muse*’ will consequently mean ‘the lyric poetry of *Anacreon*’. *The hero's harp*—*i. e.*, the heroic poetry of Homer *e.g.*, his epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

**N. B.**—The harp is an appropriate symbol of Homer's heroic poetry. The harp is always associated with

minstrels whose duty was to celebrate in songs the brave deeds of ancient heroes ; now the two epics of Homer deal with brave deeds of ancient heroes.

*The lover's lute*—i.e., lyric poetry. Anacreon is noted for his love lyrics and drinking songs. The lute, with its soft, piping note, is a fit symbol of the love lyric.

*Have.....fame*—have received the recognition. *Your shores*—your country. Byron means to say, that the epics of Homer and the lyrics of Anacreon, no longer appreciated in Greece, have received their due recognition elsewhere. *Their place of birth*—i.e., Greece. *Mute*—silent. *Their place.....mute*—i.e., the poetic spirit is now dead in Greece. Cf.—

“Woods, that wave o’er Delphi’s steep,  
Isles, that crown the Ægean deep,  
Fields that cool Ilissus laves,  
Or where Mæanders’s amber waves  
In lingering lab’rinths creep,  
How do your tuneful echoes languish  
Mute, but to the voice of anguish.”

—Gray

*Sounds.....west*—i.e., the Greek ideals, forgotten in the land of their birth have inspired poetry in the countries far west. The art of poetry which has declined in Greece is now flourishing in the countries of the west (England, France, etc.). *Your sires*—i.e., the ancestors of the Greeks. *Islands of the Blest*—known also as *Fortunate Insula* (i.e., Fortunate Islands); they were placed by the early Greeks at the extremity of the earth, near the river Oceanus, and later on were identified with the *Canary and Madeira Islands*. The Isles of the Blest were the abode of the souls of those who were made immortal by their heroic deeds.

*Their place of birth...blest*—**Expl.** Byron remarks here that the poetic spirit is now quite dead in Greece, which was once so celebrated as the birth-place of the great epic poet Homer and the great lyric poet Anacreon ; these poets now neglected in their birth-place (Greece), are admired in other countries far in the West ; even beyond the Islands of the Blest, which the ancient Greeks believed, marked the end of the then known world ;—in countries (e.g., England and France) the existence of which

could never have been dreamt of by them, the echoes of the ancient Greek poetry are to be heard (*i.e.*, the ancient Greek ideals have inspired poetic production in modern England, France, etc. It is admitted by all, that European literatures owe much to Greek art and Greek culture).

**St. 3. Substance.**—[No one standing on the plain of Marathon can think that Greece will remain in bondage for ever and can regard himself as a slave when he is irresistibly reminded of the glorious victory of the Greeks over the Persians at Marathon in ancient times.]

**Paraphrase.**—The mountains tower above Marathon and Marathon faces the sea and meditating there alone for a time I (the poet) could not but cherish the hope that Greece might still win her freedom, for when I stood on the plain, where the Persian invaders met their death at the hands of the brave Greeks, I could not regard myself to be a slave.

*The mountains*—Mount Pentelicus. Marathon was a plain, N. E. of Attica, lying between Mount Pentelicus and the Sea. *Look on*—command a sight of.

*Marathon*—It is celebrated as the scene of the victory of the Greeks, under Miltiades, over the Persians, 490 B.C. It is one of the battles which decided the fate of Europe; for if the Persians had won the day, they would have surely been the future lords of Europe.

It will be noted here that the battle of Marathon took place during the Second Persian Expedition under Darius and Artaphernes (and not under Xerxes). *Musing*—meditating. *I dreamed.....free*—I imagined that the Greeks might still win their freedom. If the modern Greeks are the descendants of the heroes of Marathon, they cannot long remain in bondage and slavery to their Turkish rulers.

*Greece.....free*—N. B. The student will not be able to follow the trend of thought unless he is acquainted with the outlines of Greek history which we give below. The two important states in ancient Greece were Athens and Sparta. They forgot their rivalry and united in resisting the Persians, first under Darius, and then under Xerxes; and in the final Greek victory over the Persians, the credit is no less due to the

Spartans than to the Athenians. If in the Second Persian Expedition the Athenians made a bold stand at Marathon, the Spartans under Leonidas, dying nobly at Thermopylæ in the Third Persian Expedition, contributed more to the defeat of the Persians. After the Persian War was over, Athens attained to a great height of power which provoked the jealousy of Sparta, and then came the Peloponnesian War in which both Athens and Sparta were exhausted. Greece then fell a prey to the semi-alien power of Mæcedon under Philip. Alexander the Great who succeeded Philip extended his empire to the Hindu-kush and the Indus. The glory and prosperity of Greece under Alexander were very short-lived, and passed away with Alexander's death. In the meantime, the Romans had become a powerful nation and in course of extending their conquest in the east, they turned their attention to Greece. Under the Romans, Greece enjoyed considerable prosperity which was interrupted by a national rising led by Mithridates in the first century B. C.; this was suppressed with great severity in 84 B. C. After the break-up of the Roman Empire Greece formed part of the Byzantine dominions till 1204, when it was seized by the Latins. *In 1460, the greater part of Greece was conquered by the Turks*; the Venetians for sometime retained several of the islands, and warred against the Turks from time to time, but by 1718 the whole country came under the rule of the Turks. *At the time, when Byron writes there was a national awakening among the Greeks. In 1821, open rebellion broke out and the war of Greek Independence began with a rising in Moldavia.* Byron worked hard in the cause of Greek freedom till he died of fever at Mesolonghi, April 19, 1824. The Turks were by this time expelled from Greece, but they after obtaining reinforcements, under Ibrahim Pasha, from Egypt, were able to reconquer the country in 1825. Britain, Russia and France then came to the aid of Greece and the Turkish and Egyptian fleets were defeated at *Navarino*, 1827. The independence of Greece was finally recognised in 1830.

*Persian's grave—i.e., Marathon where many Persians met with death. Deem—regard.*

*And musing there.....free*—**Expl.** The poet (a Greek who sings of the Isles of Greece in Byron's poem, *Don Juan*) supposes that no Greek standing on the plain of Marathon can ever

think that his country will always remain in bondage and slavery. He will be strongly reminded of the glory achieved at Marathon by the ancient Greeks, and will look forward to the day when his country will win her freedom. The idea is that Greece cannot absolutely lose her spirit of independence and must sooner or later have a galling sense of her servitude and surely then she will make a desperate effort to regain her freedom. The sight of Marathon will fill the heart of a Greek patriot with hopes of a brighter future, for the spirit of freedom cannot be dead in a country which had such a glorious past. [We have noted above that there was already a revival of national feeling in Greece at this time and therefore the poet has good reason to be hopeful about the future of Greece.]

**St. 4. Substance**—[Xerxes, the Persian king, watched his naval array off the coast of Salamis in the morning but at the close of the day it was nowhere to be seen.]

**Paraphrase**—Xerxes, the Persian king, seated himself on the summit of a rock which commanded a view of the Island of Salamis, and watched with pride his innumerable ships that lay below, and forces that were composed of men from different nationalities. In the morning he counted them, at the close of the day there was no trace of them—for his forces had been completely defeated and dispersed by the heroic Greeks.

*A king*—i.e., Xerxes, the king of Persia (485—465 B. C.) He led an expedition against Greece both by land and by water. He crossed the Hellespont on a bridge of boats, and ordering his fleet to wait for him at Therme, marched through Macedonia and Thessaly until he arrived at the pass of Thermopylæ. Here he met with a very stubborn resistance offered by Leonidas, the brave Spartan, with only three hundred Spartans; but was able to win the victory through the treachery of a Milian who showed him a pass over the mountains. Then he proceeded victoriously through Phœcis and Bœtia, and at length took Athens. By this time his fleet also arrived at the bay of Phaleram, off the coast of Salamis, though much enfeebled by storm and the Greeks on the way. Here he witnessed from a lofty seat on one of the declivities of Mount Ægaleos the crushing defeat of his mighty armament at Salamis. The Greeks completely defeated the Persians at Salamis. *Sate*—Archaic form of 'sat.' *Rocky brow*—the edge of rocky

mountain of Ægaleos. *Looks o'er*—overlooks; towers over; commands the view cf. *Sea-born*—arising out of the sea. [The reference is perhaps to the volcanic origin of Salamis.] *Men in nations*—soldiers coming from different nationalities. *He counted them*—Xerxes actually counted his forces long before he came to the coast of Salamis.

**N. B.**—After crossing the Hellespont when he came to the plain of Doriscus, he numbered his military and naval forces which according to Herodotus, amounted to 2,641, 610 fighting men.

*He counted.....they?* **Expl.**—The poet refers here to the naval victory won by the Greeks over the Persians at Salamis. Xerxes watched the progress of the battle throughout the whole day from the summit of Mount Ægaleos. In the morning his heart was filled with pride at the sight of his innumerable forces and ships; but by evening they had been defeated and dispersed, and were no more to be seen.

**St. 5. Substance**—[How fallen Greece must have been from the height of her ancient glory and power! There is nobody now to sing her heroic deeds of the past nor, is there any body who feels touched by them.]

**Paraphrase.**—Where are now the mighty hordes of Xerxes? They are no more; but where are you, O my country (Greece)? On your shore the heroic songs are no more to be heard, and no hero breathes. Must your poetic tradition so long sustained by the highest inspiration descend to an unworthy poet like myself?

*Where.....they—i.e., they (the Persians) were totally destroyed by the Greeks.*

*And where.....country?*—**N. B.** The poet here emphasises the contrast between the Greek's fierce spirit of independence in ancient times (and their brave fight against the Persians), and their present servitude under the Turks. One can hardly believe that it is the same Greece that once gladly shed her blood to defend Freedom. The poet wonders how Greece, noted for her love of freedom, can so tamely submit to the rule of the Turks.

*Voiceless shore*—a land where the poetic spirit is dead; Greece which no longer produces any poet. Poetry cannot



flourish except on the soil of freedom. *Heroic lay*—songs celebrating the brave deeds of ancient Greek heroes, e.g., the epics of Homer. *Tuneless*—silent; mute. *He.....now*—The old race of Greek poets (who sang of the brave deeds of ancient Greek heroes and thus fostered in the Greeks their love of freedom and glory) is now extinct. *The heroic bosom*—the heart instinct with courage. Fig. *Synecdoche*—(part for the whole). *The heroic.....no more*—There is no one in Greece whose heart burns with enthusiasm for heroic deeds. *Lyre*—a stringed instrument, here poetry. *Thy lyre*—the heroic style of poetry as cultivated in ancient Greece. *Divine*—inspired by the spirit of God. *Degenerate*—degrade; fall below the high standard of excellence. *And must.....mine?*—The glories of Greece have so long been sung by poets of immortal fame under divine inspiration but at last this task has fallen upon a worthless person like myself.

**St. 6. Substance.**—[If now there is no glory to be sung of, a member of the enslaved Greek race as the poet is, he can at least blush and grieve for the present degradation of his country, viz., Greece.]

**Paraphrase.**—It is not in vain, that in the absence of any fame to be sung of, I belonging to an enslaved race, can feel at least a blush of patriotic shame overspreading my countenance even as I sing. What else is left to the poet to do? He can only feel ashamed of his own countrymen and shed a tear for his country.

*'Tis something*—it is of some use; it cannot go in vain. *In... ..fame*—in the absence of any glory to be sung of. The glory of Greece was once the theme of the poet, but Greece has now no glory, what will the poet sing? *Linked*—attached or belonging to. *Fettered*—in chains; in servitude. *Race*—i. e., the Greeks in bondage and slavery to the Turks. *Patriot's shame*—a feeling of shame, which every patriot must experience at the degradation of his country. The sense of shame may ultimately take shape in an active endeavour to win freedom for the country. *Suffuse*—redden. The construction is *to feel a patriot's shame suffuse my face*. *For what.....here?*—There is nothing else for the poet to do. Bereft of the glory of freedom, Greece can no more stir the imagination of a poet. *For Greeks a blush*—i. e., he (the poet) can feel ashamed of the Greeks, and of their state.

of slavery. *For Greece a tear*—He can only shed tears in memory of the ancient glories of Greece.

*'Tis something.....race*—**Expl.** Since Greece has lost her glory and freedom, what will the poet sing of? Though he (the poet) is a member of the enslaved Greek race, he at least feels ashamed of his countrymen and their state of slavery, and it will be of some use if he can awaken the same sense of shame in their hearts, for then they will resolve to win freedom for themselves by overthrowing the rule of their Turkish conquerors.

**St. 7. Substance.**—[There is no use weeping over the past glories which the forefathers of the modern Greeks earned with their blood. If the old Spartan spirit could be revived among the modern Greeks, they would surely repeat the brave deeds of Thermopylæ.]

**Paraphrase.**—Must we (modern Greeks) simply mourn for the happier days that have passed away? Must we merely feel the faint glow of shame? While we blush, our forefathers shed their blood to win glory. Oh Earth, give back from out of your bosom a few of our Spartans who sacrificed their lives for freedom; grant only three out of the three hundred Spartan heroes who died so gloriously for freedom and inspired by these heroes, modern Greeks would again fight as heroically as the ancient Greeks and they will enact another glorious Thermopylæ.

*Weep*—mourn. *Days.....blest*—happier days of Greece. *Must we.....blest?*—These are words of self-reproach uttered by the poet. The duty of the Greeks is not merely to mourn for the happier days and *past* glories of Greece but to wake up *now* and strive for their freedom. *Must.....blush*—Mere feeling of shame at the present degradation of Greece is not enough, the duty of the modern Greeks is to lift their country out of its degradation. *Our.....bled*—Notice the forcible contrast here. The modern Greeks can only blush for the present degradation of their country; their forefathers shed their blood to earn the glory which has now departed. *Bled*—shed their blood, sacrificed their lives. *Render*—deliver. *Remnant*—a mere handful. *Spartan dead*—the three hundred Spartans who gladly laid down their lives in the pass of Thermopylæ for freedom. *To make.....Thermopylæ*—to repeat the brave deeds of Thermopylæ. *Thermopylæ*—The pass of Thermopylæ

was the scene of the heroic defence of Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans against the mighty army of Xerxes, the Persian king. The Persians were at first repulsed, but a mountain path being betrayed to them, they came upon the rear of Leonidas and his army. The Spartans, fell fighting bravely, including Leonidas.

*Earth.....Thermopylæ—Expl.* The poet cannot endure that the Greeks should only mourn for the happier days and past glories of Greece or blush at her present degradation. Let the Greeks wake up *now* and strive for freedom. If only three out of the three hundred Spartan heroes who sacrificed their lives at Thermopylæ were to come to life again, surely inspired by them the modern Greeks would rise and throw off the foreign rule of the Turks. In other words, if the old spirit of the Spartans who defended their freedom by sacrificing their lives would revive among the modern Greeks, they would re-enact Thermopylæ (*i. e.* repeat the brave and patriotic deeds of Thermopylæ).

**St. 8. Substance—**[The poet at first receives no response, then the spirits of the departed Greeks answer in thundering voice : let but one living Greek strike a blow for freedom and they will come to the help of the modern Greeks.]

**Paraphrase.**—What, are you still silent? No response to my call? Ah! no, the dead are not dead. Their voices seem to be coming like the sound of a distant waterfall, and those voices answer : "Let but one living Greek strike a blow for freedom—we are coming to your help." It is the living who have no spirit.

*Silent still*—At first the poet receives no response from the spirits of the departed Greeks whom he has invoked in the previous stanza, *Ah! no—i. e.*, the poet's invocation has not been in vain. The voices of the dead now respond to his call. *Sound.....fall*—Come like the deep sound of a distant waterfall. *One living head—i. e.*, one living Greek. Fig. *Synecdoche*—(part for the whole). *But—only. Arise*—strike a blow for freedom. *We come*—The idea expressed here is, that the heroic spirit of the fore-fathers of the Greeks is not altogether dead in modern Greeks. Let there be but an organised effort to regain their freedom and it will revive. *Who are dumb—who are perfectly resigned to their servitude. 'Tis.....dumb—*

The living Greeks seem to be lethargic, and are perfectly content to wear out their lives in slavery.

*Let one living.....dumb—Expl.* The poet invokes the spirits of the departed heroes of Greece, and they seem to answer that they are ready to come to help the modern Greeks if they will exert themselves. It is not too late to make an organised attempt to regain their lost freedom, for the old heroic spirit is not yet dead among the modern Greeks. If a single Greek strike a blow for freedom, all the Greeks, remembering their old glory and the self-sacrifice of their forefathers, will gather round him ; but alas ! the modern Greeks seem to be a dead mass without any fire and enthusiasm ; in other words, they seem to be contented with their state of slavery.

**St. 9. Substance—**[The modern Greeks can now only respond to the base impulse of pleasure, what is the use of trying to rouse in them the old heroic spirit ?]

**Paraphrase—**There is no use trying to stir up the old spirit of the Greeks. Let me sing to other notes ; fill to the brim the cup with Samian wine. No talk of battles here ; let the Turkish forces fight battles. We (modern Greeks) should rather shed the blood-red juice of Scio's vines. Listen ! how to the base call of pleasure answers each pleasure-loving 'hero' !

*In vain—*It is a hopeless task to rouse among the modern Greeks the heroic spirit of their forefathers. They are too degraded to feel the noble desire for freedom.

*Strike.....chords—N. B.* The poet wants to change the subject of his song. He has so long been singing of the glory of freedom, of the heroic achievements of ancient Greeks, with a view to rouse in his audience (of modern Greeks) the old spirit of liberty of their forefathers. Now being disappointed, he turns to a theme which is more appropriate to his degraded audience. He exchanges the heroic note for a soft and voluptuous song of wine and mirth fit for the degraded modern Greeks. *High—to the brim. Samian wine—the wine of Samos :* one of the chief exports of Samos is wine. *Fill.....wine—*The poet implies that the only thing for which the modern Greek is fit is drinking and revelry. *Leave battles—*The modern Greeks won't hear of any battles, they are too soft and pleasure-loving to fight battles. Battles are better left to the less refined Turks.

*Hordes*—troops ; the fact is that modern Greeks have now become degenerated by luxury, and have no nerve for battles. *Shed the blood*—notice the bitter sarcasm. The modern Greeks are not now capable of shedding their own blood or the blood of their enemy in order to win their freedom, but what they are capable of is to shed the blood of Scio's vine (*i.e.*, to pour out again and again the blood-red wine of Scio). This is no doubt a very severe judgment upon modern Greeks. *Scio's vine*—*i.e.*, the wine of Scio. As we have noted above Scio is another name of Chios. It is one of the most fertile spots in the Levant, and yields rich produce of all kinds, principally wine, figs, lemons, oranges and olives. *Rising*—responding. *Ignoble*—base. *Call*—summons to mirth. *Bold*—used ironically. *Bacchanal*—*i.e.*, the worshipper of Bacchus, the wine-god of the Greeks ; here simply a reveller.

**St. 10. Substance**—[The Greeks have yet the Pyrrhic dance, but have forgotten the manlier lesson, *viz.*, the Pyrrhic phalanx for fighting battles. Cadmus who invented the alphabet did not imagine that his descendants would be slaves.]

**Paraphrase**—The Pyrrhic dance is still in vogue among you, but why is the art of forming the Pyrrhic phalanx for fighting battles gone out of use ? Of two such lessons, why do you (Greeks) forget the nobler and the more heroic art ? You still use the alphabet Cadmus bequeathed to you. But do you think that he intended them for slaves like you ?

*Pyrrhic dance*—the war dance of the ancient Lacedæmonians, the origin of which was attributed to Pyrrichos, a Dorian. *You...yet*—The Pyrrhic dance is still in vogue among the Greeks. The poet implies here that they have forgotten the manlier art of forming the Pyrrhic phalanx. *Pyrrhic phalanx*—'Phalanx' (फ़ालैन्क्स) is the name given to the formation of the heavy infantry of the ancient Grecian armies. It consisted of a series of parallel columns of men, standing close, one behind the other, and capable of penetrating and resisting almost any other formation. The Spartan Phalanx was the original of this formation, and consisted of soldiers standing from 4 to 8 men deep. Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, was the greatest warrior of his time and his *phalanx* may be supposed to be the phalanx having the highest degree of efficiency. *Where.....gone?*—While the Greeks have retained the Pyrrhic dance, they have forgotten the secret of

forming the Pyrrhic phalanx (*i.e.*, the art of warfare). *The nobler.....one*—*i.e.*, the Pyrrhic phalanx. The Greeks have forgotten the manlier game of war and retained the soft accomplishment (*viz.*, the dance). *Letters*—*i.e.*, alphabet. *Cadmus*—the mythical founder of Thebes. He is said to have introduced into Greece from Phœnicia or Egypt an alphabet of sixteen letters and thus he laid the foundation of the glorious Greek culture and literature. *He meant.....slave?*—Cadmus did not imagine that his descendants were going to prove themselves so base. How could the Greeks who have inherited from Cadmus his famous alphabet have become so base and degraded?

*Of two such lessons.....slave?*—**Expl.** The poet points out here that the modern Greeks have almost lost the art of warfare. They still practise the Pyrrhic war dance, but have forgotten the Pyrrhic phalanx for fighting battles. They are not so interested in the manlier game of war as in the soft accomplishment of dancing. This is surely a proof of the decay of the old heroic spirit in them. How could they forget their glorious ancestor, Cadmus? How could they prove themselves unworthy of the letters (*i.e.*, alphabet) bequeathed to them by Cadmus! The poet is evidently thinking here of the literary glory of ancient Greece, the foundation of which is to be traced to Cadmus. The poet means that the glorious traditions of their past ought to awaken the Greeks to a sense of their duty.

**St. 11. Substance**—[If it is said that Anacreon served a tyrant, the poet's answer is that the rule of a Greek tyrant (the tyrant was a Greek in those days) is to be preferred to the alien domination of the Turk.]

**Paraphrase**—Fill the cup to the brim with Samian wine—we should rather not think of the ancient glories of Greece. The Samian wine inspired the lyrics of Anacreon who was a slave. But if Anacreon was not free, he being subject to the tyrant Polycrates, his master Polycrates was a Greek—we served then at least our own countrymen, and no foreign rulers (like the Turks who rule us at present).

*Bowl*—wine-cup. *Themes*—*i.e.*, the ancient glories of Greece. *We.....these*—It is better to drop the subject of the ancient glories of Greece since it is not suited to the taste of a degraded modern Greek audience. *It*—*i.e.*, wine. It has been noted that Anacreon sang the praise of wine and

love; wine may be therefore said to be the main source of his poetic inspiration. *Divine*—used here in the sense of 'exquisite', charming. There is a suspicion of *irony* in the word as used here. The modern Greeks may regard Anacreon's lyrics as 'divine', since they have been inspired by wine to which they are themselves so much addicted.

*He served*—i.e., he lived under the rule of a tyrant, hence he was not free in the true sense of the term. *Polycrates*—one of the most powerful of the Greek tyrants. Having established a tyranny at Samos, he collected a fleet, mastered the *Ægean Sea* and by piracy amassed a great fortune. He was the patron of Anacreon and many poets and artists adorned his court. Polycrates was subsequently captured and crucified. *But..... Polycrates*—Notice here that the poet makes a distinction in favour of Polycrates. The idea is that even the rule of the tyrant (when he is a Greek like Polycrates) ought to be preferred to the rule of Turks who are foreigners. *Tyrant*—A tyrant, in Greek history, means an absolute ruler having his office by usurpation (not necessarily a cruel and oppressive ruler). [When free governments were established in place of hereditary sovereignties, all who exercised absolute power in a state came to be known as *tyrants*—the term 'tyrant' at first did not imply so much the *illegal and oppressive exercise of power as the irregular way in which the power was gained*; the word tyrant has now deteriorated.] *Masters*—rulers. *Our masters ...countrymen*—The Greeks who then lived under the rule of a Greek tyrant, though they could not claim the freedom of citizenship in a republican state, could at least claim that they were not subject to an alien (foreign) ruler.

*He served.....countrymen*—**Expl.** It may be said that Anacreon lived under the rule of a tyrant, and was therefore no better than a slave. The poet's answer is that Anacreon was not a slave in the same sense as the modern Greek is. If Anacreon did not enjoy the freedom of a citizen in a republican state, the master Polycrates whom he served was at least his own countryman. The modern Greek is a far worse slave because he is serving a foreign master, viz., the Turk.

**St. 12. Substance**—[Why blame the rule of a tyrant? Miltiades, the tyrant of the Chersonese, was the best champion

of Greek liberty. If Greece were to produce such another tyrant surely all Greeks would welcome him.]

**Paraphrase**—The tyrant of the Chersonese was the staunchest champion of liberty, and that tyrant was Miltiades. Oh! if the present hour would give birth to another such tyrant, the Greeks would offer the most willing submission to his authority.

**Chersonese**—Chersonesus Thracica (Peninsula of the Dardanelles or of Gallipoli). *Freedom's.....friend*—the best promoter of liberty. *Miltiades*—son of Cimon, became tyrant of the Chersonesus. When Athens was threatened with invasion by the Persians under Datis and Artaphernes, Miltiades was chosen one of the ten generals. It was Miltiades, who induced other Greek generals to risk a battle with the Persian enemy. He was at the head of the Greek army which on the ever memorable field of Marathon destroyed the Persian army and saved Europe. Miltiades thus saved the liberty of Greece and the liberty of Europe—he was 'Freedom's best and bravest friend.'

*That the present hour.....kind*—if the present hour would give birth to another such tyrant like Miltiades, 'Freedom's best and bravest friend.' *Such chains as his*—The bondage that he will impose upon the Greeks. *Sure to bind*—sure to be willingly submitted to.

*Oh.....bind*—**Expl.** After pointing out that the rule even of a tyrant in the old days of Greece was not wholly bad (for the tyrant was at least a Greek), the poet holds that if a tyrant like Miltiades were to be born again, he would surely unite the Greeks and give them freedom. For it was at the suggestion of Miltiades that a battle was risked with the Persian enemy at Marathon and Miltiades played an important part in the battle of Marathon in defeating the Persians and thus saving the liberty of Greece. The Greeks therefore may rightly welcome such a tyrant like Miltiades who may teach them how to win liberty from the foreign rule of the Turk.

**St. 13. Substance**—[The poet is consoled to think that there exists a heroic race on Suli's rock and Parga's shore, and there the spirit of freedom may not be altogether dead.]

**Paraphrase**—Fill the cup to the brim with Samian wine! On Suli's rock there exists the fragment of a heroic race such as the Doric mothers might have reared; and in them, perhaps is



planted such a spirit of independence that the Heraclidæ might gladly claim kinship with them.

*Suli's rock*—a mountainous region in the south of Epirus. *Parga's shore*—a seaport in Albania. *Remnant*—fragment. *Line*—race. *Doric mothers*—the Spartan mothers. The Spartans were noted for their rugged simplicity and sturdy manhood. They were originally called Dorians, and settled in Peloponnesus. **N.B.**—It is related that Ægimius, the king of the Dorians, was driven from his dominions by the Lapithæ, but was reinstated by Hercules; that the children of Hercules came to them for help when they had been expelled from the Peloponnesus; that it was to restore them to their rights that the Dorians invaded Peloponnesus;—accordingly the conquest of the Peloponnesus by the Dorians is usually called the return of the Heraclidæ. *Bore*—reared. *Some seed.....sown*—The seed of a heroic race has been planted. *Heracleidan blood*—the descendants of Hercules, i.e., the Dorians. *Own*—acknowledge as their king. [Supply 'whom' after 'sown', and the sentence will read aright.]

*On Suli's rock.....might own*—**Expl.** Disappointed by the indifference of the Greeks, the poet now turns to the Albanians who have a passionate love of independence. The old Spartan spirit survives in the Albanians: they are such a people as the ancient Spartan mothers would have been proud to rear and the Heraclidæ would not have disowned them as their kinsmen and brethren.

**N.B.** As a race the Albanians are one of the most ancient in the Balkan Peninsula; they are noted for their sturdy independence, and for the tenacity with which they have clung to their customs and traditions; the majority of the Albanians are Moslems. The political history of Albania is a record of struggle for independence during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In spite of brave and prolonged resistances, Albania gradually fell into the hands of the Turks. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries attempts were made by individual Moslem chieftains to establish their independence in Albania, but with the fall of one, Ali Pasha who was ruling Albania at the time when Byron visited it, these attempts practically came to an end.

**St. 14. Substance**—[The Greeks must not expect any help from outside in the struggle for freedom. They should depend on their own strength and on their native resources. Turkish force, and the deceitful dealings of the French will ruin Greece, however well-organised it may be to fight for freedom.]

**Paraphrase**—O Greeks ! Do not trust to the French in a struggle for freedom. They have a king who knows how to serve his own interests. \*The only hope of striking boldly at the Turkish power lies in the native strength of arms of the Greeks and the warlike spirit of Greek soldiers. But Turkish force and French duplicity would totally crush your power, however, mighty it may be.

**Trust.....freedom**—Do not expect to win freedom with the help of foreigners. Byron says the same thing in *Childe Harold* :—

“Hereditary bondsmen ! know ye not  
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow ?  
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought.  
Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye ? no !  
True,—they may lay your proud despoilers low,  
But not for you will Freedom’s altars flame”.

**Franks**—Frenchmen. *A king.....sells—i.e.*, king who studies his own interest in any policy he adopts. The French king then was Louis XVIII. He had not a very strong personality ; on his accession to the throne he promised to respect the rights and liberties of his subjects, but followed a reactionary policy. This policy was responsible for the tremendous reception given to Napoleon when he escaped from Elba and landed again in France. Byron, therefore, points out that Greece can expect no help from the French king who did not pursue any strong, liberal and steady policy. *In native swords*—native strength of arms. *Native ranks—i.e.*, their own Greek soldiers. *The only hope.....dwells*—The Greeks can only expect to strike boldly at the Turkish power if they depend on their own strength of arms, and the support of their own Greek soldiers. *Hope of courage*—may be explained in two ways : (1) the hope of invoking courage in the hearts of the Greeks ; (2) hope of facing boldly the Turks on the battle-field. *Turkish force*—Turkish military strength. *Latin fraud*—the wavering, deceitful policy

of the French king. As a matter of fact, the Greeks ought not to look to the French king for help as he pursued a selfish policy and could have little sympathy with the aspirations of the Greeks for freedom. *Break.....shield*—crush your growing unity and power. *However broad*—however perfectly organised your resistance to the Turkish rule may be.

*In native swords.....broad—Expl.* Byron exhorts Greece to depend upon her own strength of arms in order to attain freedom, without expecting any help from outside. The French king, Louis XVIII, who has been pursuing a royalist policy cannot really help the Greeks. For he cannot sympathise with their aspiration for freedom. Whatever effort the Greeks make to win their freedom can only be successful, if they trust to their own strength of arms and expect their own Greek soldiers to do their duty properly. If they rely on the unsteady, deceitful policy of the French king, they will surely be ruined; on the one hand they would have to meet the strong Turkish armies, and on the other, they would play into the hands of the deceitful French king, and thus their national movement will be totally crushed.

**St. 15. Substance**—[It is better to indulge in revelry and merry-making. The poet (a Greek) sees the maidens of his own country dancing beneath the shade, but he is ashamed to think that they should suckle slaves.]

**Paraphrase**—Fill the cup to the brim with Samian wine. Our maidens are dancing in the grove. I see their beautiful black eyes sparkle. But gazing on each maid, glowing with the ruddy glow of health and pleasure, my own eyes drop burning tears to think that such breasts should suckle slaves.

*Beneath the shade*—in a grove. The poet again is referring here to the love of pleasure among the Greeks. *Glorious*—used in the sense of 'beautiful.' *Black eyes*—the dark flashing eyes of the Greek maidens. *Glowing maid*—i.e., a maid warmed or flushed by dancing. *My own*—Supply 'face' after 'own.' *Burning*—sorrowing. The idea is that the tears of sorrow feel hot. *Laves*—washes. *Suckle*—give suck to; rear. *My own..... slaves*—The poet means to say that his own face is bathed by hot, scorching tears of sorrow, when he thinks that these beautiful maidens will in future be the mothers of slaves. It is

a bitter thought to him that they will not give birth to, as they did before, a heroic race.

**St. 16. Substance**—[The Greek poet desires to be placed on the height of Sunium where he will mingle his songs with the murmur of the waves, and where he will die singing till the last moment like the swan. Now farewell to all pleasures!]

**Paraphrase**—Let me (the poet) be placed on the marble-covered top of Sunium where I and the waves alone will mingle our songs into one sorrowful murmur with nobody to hear it. There like the swan I shall die singing till the last moment. I cannot dwell in a country of slaves. Let me dash down to the ground the cup of Samian wine.

*Sunium's marbled sleep*—A promontory at the south extremity of Attica, with a town of the same name upon it. Here was a splendid marble temple of Athena, the columns of which are still standing. *Marbled*—because covered with the ruins of the marble temple. *Where nothing*—where there is nobody to listen to our songs. *Sweep*—flow, on. *Save.....sweep*—i.e., the poet and the waves will mingle their songs into one sorrowful murmur which there will be nobody else to hear except themselves. *Swan-like*—like a swan fading away in music. It was an old belief that at the moment of death the swan plunges into water and keeps singing plaintively till death. *Let me.....die*—Let me die singing, till the last moment, of the past glories of Greece. *A land of slaves*—i.e., Greece, the people of which are now quite content to remain in a state of slavery.

*A land.....mine*—I can never agree to dwell in a country of slaves. The fact is that the poet has tried in vain to rouse the heroic spirit among the modern Greeks,—since they willingly submit to slavery, he will have nothing more to do with them.

*Dash.....wine. Expl.*—Here we see that the Greek poet did not heartily join in the revelry of the degenerated Greeks. He only humoured them by playing a softer tune on his lyre. Disgusted as he is with himself and his own degraded, slavish countrymen, he now dashes down the cup of wine. [This last line has a personal allusion also to Byron himself. Byron often held long spells of revelry, but he could never suppress in wine the agony of his heart. A moment did arrive in his life when he actually dashed down the cup of wine and went to

Greece to die for the freedom of the Greeks. He joined the Greek War of Independence but died before Greece could win her freedom.]

*Place me.....die—Expl.* At last finding that there is no response from his Greek audience to the call of freedom, the Greek poet wants to betake himself to the top of Sunium, renouncing his own country which is a land of slaves. On the top of Sunium he will mingle his songs of the past glories of Greece with the murmur of the waves which there will be nobody else to hear, and thus only can he soothe the anguish of his mind. There will he sing and sing in unison with the moaning waves till he dies like a swan fading away in music. What else can he do? His own countrymen are dead to all noble impulses and will never rise for freedom for which his soul cried. How can he live among them? The only course open to him now is to die singing the glories of Greece.

### Question and Answers.

Q. 1. *Indicate the context and occasion of "The Isles of Greece."*

Ans. See *Introduction*.

Q. 2. *Illustrate Byron's passionate love of freedom from it.*

Ans. See *Critical Remarks*.

Q. 3. *Draw a contrast between the past glories of Greece and its degradation at the time of Byron.*

Ans. See the *Substance* of each stanza.

Q. 4. *Explain :—*

(a) The Scian.....refuse.

(b) A king sate.....Salamis.

(c) 'Tis something.....my face.

(d) Of the three hundred.....Thermopylæ.

(e) Oh, that the present.....bind.

(f) They have.....sells.

Ans. See *Notes*.

Q. 5. *Annotate*.—

Burning Sappho ; Scian and the Teian muse ; Islands of the Blest ; Heroic lay ; Dearth of fame ; Scio's vine ; Bacchanal ; Pyrrhic dance ; Pyrrhic phalanx ; Cadmus ; Polycrates ; Miltiades ; Doric mothers ; Latin fraud ; Sunium's marbled steep.

## THE OCEAN

**Date and Context**—These stanzas are taken from the fourth Canto of *Childe Harold* composed between 1816—1819 by Byron during his Italian tour. The impassioned address to the ocean forms a fitting conclusion to the poem. Childe Harold, Byron's hero, who travels far and wide, at last arrives on the Alban Mount (*Monte Cavo*) where his journey is brought to a close. Childe Harold, standing on the Alban Mount, takes his last look of the ocean, not without a deep yearning for it, and addresses it in impassioned words. [Note that Byron's hero *Childe Harold* is Byron himself, he relates Byron's experiences and expresses Byron's sentiments.]

**Central Thought**—*The ocean makes man realise his own littleness.* Man's power ceases with the shore ; on the ocean, he is absolutely at the mercy of the waves, and must seek a doubtful shelter in a neighbouring post. The ocean destroys alike the Armada's pride or the spoils of Trafalgar ; no armaments can ever give man sovereignty over it. The empires on the shores of the ocean may rise and fall, but no change marks the ocean except the ceaseless motion of its waves. Lastly, the poet dwells upon the majesty and awfulness of the ocean—it is boundless, endless and sublime, the image of eternity, "the throne of the Invisible"

**Critical Remarks**—We have sufficiently indicated in our *Literary Estimate* that Byron had not the artist's gifts and nature, and cared little about what he wrote. The right kind of poetry that will touch our hearts,—Byron cannot always give us ; what he writes is often mere rhetoric, and not poetry. But Byron is supreme in a kind of descriptive poetry ; in sketching a scene or incident he has a telling force and fire which few poets can claim. His address to the ocean does not surely reach this level, but it is a *splendid outburst*. He does convey a sense of awe and majesty which the ocean possesses to every mind ; and

in the last stanza but one Byron attains the note of high seriousness, which is so rare with him.

**Metre and Versification**—Byron wrote *Childe Harold* in the Spenserian stanza. *The Spenserian stanza consists of nine lines, each of five iambic feet, except the last which is an Alexandrine (i.e., a line of 6 feet).* The lines rhyme alternately, the last line rhyming with the 8th invariably. *The rhyme scheme is ab ab bc bcc.* The stanza is so-called after Spenser who first invented it. It is adapted to elaborate description and gradual development of the theme; in the hands of Spenser, it attains a dreamy grace and languorous music which we do not certainly associate with Byron's narrative and declamatory style. But Byron has made it the fittest medium for the expression of his frequent transitions of thought, for the glowing description of scenes and lands and for the vivid narrations of events and experiences. It has, as Saintsbury remarks, "energy, picturesqueness, and a narrative motion very different from that of the original indeed but for the purpose, preferable." The normal line, as we have stated above, consists of 5 iambic feet or 6 in the case of an Alexandrine but there are occasional variations, *viz.*, the substitution of a trochee (*i.e.*, an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one), the substitution of an anapæst (*i.e.*, two accented syllables followed by an unaccented syllable). Let us first take a normal line—

The wre'cks | are a'll | thy de'ed | nor do'th | remain |

Here is an instance in which the first part is a trochee.

Sto'ps with | the sho're ; | upo'n | the wa' | tery plain.

Take an instance in which an anapæst has been used :

And m'a | ny a t'y | rant sin'ce | their sho'res | obe'y

**Analysis**—(1) Man's littleness, contrasted with the mightiness of the ocean.

- (a) Man's power limited to the shore (stanza 1)
- (b) His absolute helplessness on the ocean (stanza 2)
- (c) Armaments give man no sovereignty over the ocean (stanza 3)

- (2) The unchangeability of the ocean contrasted with the rise and decay of empires (stanza 4)  
 (3) The ocean, an image of eternity. (stanza 5)  
 (4) Conclusion—the poet's delight in it. (stanza 6)

**St. 1. Substance**—[The ocean acknowledges no sovereignty of man. Man may mark the earth with ruin, but he cannot extend his power over the Ocean. Whatever is destroyed on the surface of the Ocean is its own doing; nor does the Ocean retain any trace of man's ravage, except that for a moment a few bubbles indicate his own destruction.]

**Paraphrase**—Oh deep and dark blue Ocean! Flow on for ever. Innumerable ships glide majestically over you in vain. Man lays the earth waste; his sovereignty is confined to the shore. Upon the surface of the water all that is destroyed is your own doing; nor does there remain a trace of man's ravage unless it were the momentary bubble to mark his own destruction as he disappears with a groan into your depths, like a drop of rain, without being honoured by the sound of the death-bell, or coffin.

**Roll on etc.**—Byron addresses the ocean from the Alban Mount, and in the presence of its vastness and immensity he realises the littleness of man, and also describes the absolute helplessness of man on it. The awe-inspiring ocean, with its multitudes of waves ever rolling on, is rightly taken by Byron, to be the type of eternity, but in this particular line he emphasises its ceaseless motion and its unchanging character.

**Dark blue**—The deep blue colour of the water intensifies the sense of awfulness. *Ten thousand*—i.e., innumerable. The figure is *synecdoche*. *Sweep.....in vain*—though ten thousand fleets sail majestically over the ocean, they do not indicate man's sovereignty over it. *Marks.....ruin*—lays the earth waste. The poet means to say that the earth often bears the marks of man's ravage, i.e., man can destroy its beauty and loveliness. *Control*—authority. *Stops.....shore*—is confined to the land. Man can deface the beauty of the earth, but can exercise no power over the ocean. *Watery plain*—the vast expanse of the ocean. *Wrecks*—destruction of ships, etc. *The wrecks.....dead*—The destruction of ships and men on the ocean



is its own doing; in other words—man is absolutely helpless on the ocean, and even his stoutly-built ships cannot secure him from destruction. *A shadow*—a trace. *Nor doth.....ravage*—no trace of the work of destruction carried on by man ever remains on the surface of the ocean; the ocean sweeps away any sign of ruin that man may have caused. *Save.....own*—except his own ravage or destruction. The poet means to say that the ocean retains for a moment the trace of the destruction of man in the form of bubbles on its surface. When a man disappears within the depth of the ocean, the surface of water is for a moment only stirred, there is a bubble and there is nothing more. *Like...rain*—The man disappearing into the depth of the ocean is compared to a drop of rain—just as a drop of rain will lose itself in the ocean, so also a man drowned in it will be quite forgotten and leave no mark behind him. *Bubbling groan*—The poet imagines the desperate struggle of a drowning man and the final groan of despair with which he disappears into the depth of the ocean, and which only disturbs the ocean with a mere bubble. *Unknelt*—i.e., unaccompanied by the ringing of the death-bell. When a man dies in the ordinary course, the bell in the church is tolled as a mark of respect to the departed spirit. *Uncoffined*—i.e., usually the dead body is put into a coffin before it is buried; but in the case of a man who is drowned in the sea, he must be without a coffin. *Unknown*—i.e., nobody knows of the death of a man in the sea. The force of the word is that he dies unlamented.

*The wrecks.....unknown*—**Expl.** Byron here points out that the ocean is all powerful, and pays no respect to the pomp and grandeur of human beings—when man sails over it, he is absolutely at its mercy. There is no scope for man to display his power there. It is the ocean which is the absolute lord and all that is destroyed on its surface is its own doing: nor there will remain on it any sign of the work of destruction carried on by man, unless it be the sign of his own destruction. That sign is merely a bubble after the man has disappeared with a groan into the depth of the ocean. In such case, he must go without the proper rites of burial. There will be no church-bell to toll his death, nor will his body be enclosed in a coffin, nor will anybody know of his death. In fact, man realises his smallness in the presence of the vastness and immensity of the ocean.

**St. 2. Substance**—[Man can exercise no power and sovereignty over the ocean. The ocean defies man's power though man may render the earth desolate. It tosses him up and down till he seeks a refuge in a port or harbour, or till he is thrown back on the shore.]

**Paraphrase**—Man dares not tread your (the ocean's) solitary path or ransack your beds for treasure—you assert yourself and throw him off. You defy the vile power with which man can only deface the beauty of the earth, by hurling him up from your bosom to the sky, and you send him, trembling, in your sportive spray crying for help, to his gods or where perhaps he may expect to find a refuge in some port or bay near by, and then you cast him back on the shore, there leaving him to rest on earth.

*Upon.....paths*—i. e., upon the watery tracts of the ocean. *His steps.....paths*—i. e., man dares not tread upon the paths of the ocean; in other words, he does not trust himself to the Ocean. *Thy fields.....him*—just as man ravages the earth, he cannot dare in the same way to ransack the bed of the Ocean for treasure. Man does not exploit the ocean as he does the earth. *Spoil*—a thing to be plundered. *Arise*—i. e., the Ocean does not tamely submit to be exploited by man. *Shake.....thee*—i. e., the Ocean will throw up a man who will attempt to spoil it of its treasure. *Vile*—despicable. *Wields*—exercises. *The vile....destruction*—Byron means to say that the power that man wields is exercised only for the plunder and exploitation of the earth. Byron must be thinking here of the desolation of nature wrought by men for his cruel and selfish purpose, viz., in war. *Despise*—scorn.

*Shivering*—trembling. *Playful*—sportive. *Spray*—particles of water thrown up by the waves. *Shivering.....spray*—Here is the picture of a man struggling in the water for his life. *Howling*—shrieking for help. *To his gods, etc.*—Notice Byron's contempt for the so-called gods who are vainly expected to protect man from the roaring waves of the Ocean; or he may think of the imaginary shelter which man may expect to find from the unseen powers when he is at the mercy of the waves. In plain words, when a man is tossed up and down on the surface of the Ocean, he can only commit himself to the care of God or gods (i. e., unseen powers in which he believes). *And*

*send'st him etc.*—The line has been thus paraphrased by Tozer 'and causest him to call for aid on his gods, whose shrine, a feeble source of confidence stands may be in some neighbouring harbour.'

*Haply*—perhaps. *Petty hope*—i. e., his insecure hope of finding a shelter from the fury of the waves in a port or harbour. Byron means to say that the port or the harbour where man expects to be safe cannot afford any real shelter. *Near port*—The use of the word 'near' is significant; he can only hope to save his life if he can reach a neighbouring port; so ultimately it depends upon the question of distance. *Dashed*—thrust back. *Earth*—The Ocean shows his contempt for man by casting him on the shore and leaving him to rest there. *There...lay*—Tozer tries to defend the use of 'lay' as a provincialism, but it ought to be strictly 'lie'. It is one more evidence of Byron's managing "his pen with the careless and negligent ease of a gentleman of quality".

*And send'st him.....lay*—**Expl.** How absolutely helpless is man on the surface of the Ocean! He is a mere plaything of the waves. When he is tossed up and down, he struggles vainly for his life and shrieks for help to his gods. He may have the faint hope of saving his life if he can but reach some port or bay within a short distance. The Ocean, however, shows his contempt for him by hurling him back to the earth and leaving him there.

**St. 3. Substance**—[The armaments which with gun-fire pull down the walls of rock-built cities and the huge ships which make man, their creator, to be titled as the lord of the sea, are the sports and playthings of the waves after all].

**Paraphrase**—The armaments which, with guns, heavily bombard the walls of rocky cities, striking terror into the hearts of nations and of monarchs in their capitals, the oak ships which with huge sides make man (their creator) think himself the lord of you (the Ocean) and the decider of war—these are your playthings, and as a light mass of snow they disappear into the turmoil of your waves, which humble alike the pride of the Armada and the victory of Trafalgar.

*Armaments*—great guns on ships of war. *Thunderstrike*—strike with the thunder (of cannon-balls). *Rock-built cities*—

cities built upon a rock and therefore able to resist attack. *Quake*—tremble. *Monarchs.....capitals*—i.e. bidding monarchs tremble, etc.; striking terror into the hearts of monarchs. *The oak leviathans*—i.e., the huge ships looking like leviathans (the leviathan is an imaginary monster of indefinite size, supposed to resemble a whale). *Huge ribs*—the strong frames of the ships. *Clay creator*—i.e., man, the builder of the ships, will be reduced to dust after death. There is implied a contrast between the divine creator (i.e., God) of the universe and the clay creator of the ship (i.e., man). *Vain title*—a title which has no meaning. *Lord of thee*—master of the ocean. Cf. "Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves." *Arbiter of war*—i.e., one who decides the fate in a war. England (with her naval power and ships) has often played the part of the arbiter of war. *The oak leviathans.....war*—The idea here is that with the equipment of ships which often resemble in their vastness the leviathan, man may boast to be the lord of the sea and the decider of fate in war. Byron remarks that these ships, though an important deciding factor in war, are absolutely at the mercy of the sea. *These.....toys*—i.e., both man and his armaments which he has created for carrying on war are mere playthings of the Ocean. With all his inventions, man has not been able to bring the Ocean under his dominion. *Snowy flake*—a light mass of snow. *As the snowy flake*—'leaving as little trace as the flake of snow which melts on the water' (Tozer). *Melt*—i.e., disappear; are absolutely destroyed. *Yeast of waves*—turmoil of waves; 'See-thing, foaming waves'—Tozer. [Cf. the yeasty waves—*Macbeth*. Act. IV., Sc. i, l. 53.] *Mar*—spoil; destroy. *Alike*—equally. *Armada's pride*—The reference is here to the vast fleet fitted out by Philip II of Spain in order to attack England in 1589. The whole array was known as the Armada (lit. an armed force). *It consisted of 130 great war galleons, with 30 smaller ships of war. It carried 19,295 marines, 8,460 sailors, 2,088 slaves and 2,360 guns.* It was unlikely for England to meet successfully such forces, were it not that the storm in the sea did half destroy the Spanish fleet off the coast of Hebrides. England could claim little credit for the defeat of the Spanish Armada, for it was really the work of the storm on the Ocean and not of England's naval power. Byron at any rate seems to emphasise this point:—The very pride of Armada, the most formidable preparation ever made by any country for invasion was humbled

by the Ocean. *Spoils of Trafalgar*—i.e., the captured French vessels. Byron maintains that even for the victory of Trafalgar, England had really little to boast of, for surely the storm and the waves of the Ocean did their part in it, as the French ships captured by the English were destroyed in a storm depriving the English of the fruits of their victory.

**N.B.**—The battle of Trafalgar, a cape on the South coast of Spain between Cadiz and Tarifa, took place in Oct. 21, 1805. Nelson, the English admiral, defeated the French though he purchased the victory at the cost of his own life.

*These are thy toys.....Trafalgar*—**Expl.** Speaking of the armaments which are used in bombarding a city, and of the oak leviathans (ships) upon which men depend for their safety on the sea and for success in war, Byron remarks that they are after all the sports of the waves, that they are absolutely at the mercy of the Ocean. Just as a snowy flake dissolves into the air, so these equipments of war disappear into the turmoil of waves, leaving no trace behind them. The Armada which made the Spaniards so proud was scattered by the waves of the Ocean; and not the English but the storm-tossed waves were responsible for the defeat of the Armada; if the credit for the victory of Trafalgar is due to the English they were deprived of the prize of victory, for the French ships captured by the English at Trafalgar were lost by a storm on the Ocean.

**St. 4. Substance**—[The empires that once existed on the shores of the Ocean have now been totally wiped out and what a contrast is this decay of earthly empires to the unchangeable character of the Ocean! Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, these great Empires have disappeared or are in servitude, but the ocean rolls on as ever—always the same.]

**Paraphrase**—It was on your (i.e., the Ocean's) shores that empires were founded. How they are changed now except you! Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage—they are no longer what they were before. Your waters brought them power while they were free, and also through you came their reverse of fortune,—their subjection to tyrants. They are now either ruled over by aliens or they are in servitude, or they might have sunk into barbarism. Their decay has rendered whole tracts of land a wilderness. But no such change marks you except the constantly changing motion of your waves. Time:

leaves no ravages on your bright countenance, such as there are on the face of the earth. You roll on for ever always the same.

*Thy shores.....empires—i.e.,* the ancient flourishing empires were founded on your shore. It may be noted that it was the aim of the ancient peoples to found their empires within the reach of the sea, for the sea was the means of communication with other countries and served as the highway of commerce. *Changed.....thee—*All these ancient empires have undergone change except yourself. The ocean has remained the same throughout the ages, but what about the empires founded on its shores! Some of them have been totally wiped out; others are in ruins.

*Assyria—*Assyria was bounded on the north by the Niphates Mts. of Armenia, on the south lay Susiana and Babylonia, on the east by Media, and on the west by the Tigris or, more correctly the water-sheds of the Euphrates. It attained a high standard of civilization, proof of which remains in the existence of the ruins of huge cities, of irrigation contrivances and canal routes. The meagre information that we have about Assyria has been gleaned from the Old Testament which relates the invasion of Palestine by Tiglath Pileser, one of its kings in 738 B.C., the siege and capture of Jerusalem by Sargon, another king, and later on by Sennacherib in 701 B. C. Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, was destroyed about 605 B. C. *Greece—*Greece has surely lost her ancient glory and power. What Greece now is, is a mere shadow of her former existence. If Greece exists, she is in slavery under the rule of the Turks. [It has been noted above that Greece, at the time of Byron, was under the Turkish rule.] *Rome—*The Roman Empire practically came to an end in the 5th century A. D. during which Rome was repeatedly invaded by Huns and Goths.

*Carthage—*Carthage (in Africa) once disputed the mastery of the sea with Rome and was not its unworthy rival. Carthage is no longer heard of. It was totally destroyed by the Romans long ago. *What.....they—*what considerable changes must have passed over these empires, but the Ocean remains the same. *Washed.....power—*The expression will mean that the water of the ocean wafted power unto these empires; in other words, by means of trade for which the ocean provided facilities, these empires rose to power and greatness. Originally

the line stood:—"Thy waters washed them while they were free." Byron objected to the expression and it was altered into the present line. The original line, however, has been retained in many editions and can be explained in the sense that the ocean did its havoc upon these empires. *Many a tyrant since*—The construction is 'thy waters washed them many a tyrant since.' If the ocean is responsible for the former glory and power of these empires, it is also responsible for their subsequent subjection to tyrants. In other words, the sea afforded facilities to the tyrants for the conquest of these countries. *Obey*—are in possession of' (*Tozer*).

*Their shores.....obey*—i.e., these empires now are in possession of aliens (foreigners), or slaves, or savages. **N. B.**—For example, Greece is under the Turk and part of Italy under Austria. *The stranger etc.*—the Turks who are now ruling over Greece. *Slave*—We may here think of the inhabitants of those countries, who calmly submit to their servitude. *Savage*—The allusion is evidently here to the northern barbarians who sacked Rome in the 5th century A.D., and gradually dispersed over the greater part of Europe founding their own empires. *Decay*—the decline of these empires. *Has.....deserts*—has turned these tracts of land into a wilderness. *Realms*—Evidently they were once fertile regions but with the disappearance of the empires, they have turned into a wilderness. *Not so thou*—i.e., no change has come over you (Ocean). *Unchangeable*—remaining always the same. *Save*—except. *Wild.....play*—i.e., the perpetual movements of the waves. No change marks the Ocean except the ceaseless rolling of the waves. *Time.....wrinkle*—i.e., time leaves no ravages on the Ocean. Byron means to say that the Ocean is not subject to the decay of time. Time in fact wears out everything in the world, but leaves the Ocean as it is always.

*Azure*—bright blue; sky blue. *On.....brow*—i.e., on the placid and bright blue surface of the Ocean. *Creation's dawn*—i.e., the beginning of the world. *Thou.....now*—You roll now as you did before. *Thy waters.....since*—**Expl.** Reflecting upon the ancient empires founded on the shores of seas which have been now either totally wiped out or are in ruins, Byron says that whatever glory and power these empires attained were due to the seas. The sea made them great by providing facilities for commerce and communication with other parts of the world.

If these empires are now in subjection to some tyrannical rulers, the seas are responsible for it. Just as formerly the seas brought these empires power and glory, so also they opened the way subsequently to tyrants to come and rule over them. In fact, Byron makes the Ocean responsible both for the rise and the decay of the ancient empires such as Greece, Rome, Carthage, etc.

**St. 5. Substance.**—[The Ocean is the glorious mirror in which the Almighty God images Himself. It is the type and symbol of eternity whether it lies frozen round the Pole or swells in mighty torrents in torrid climates.]

**Paraphrase.**—You (Ocean) are a glorious mirror in which the Almighty's form is reflected in tempest. In all times whether calm or agitated, whether rippled by the gentle breeze or swept by the furious storm, whether lying frozen round the Pole, or flowing majestically in the tropical region, limitless, ever flowing and sublime, it is the type and symbol of eternity—the throne of the invisible God. Even from out of the moisture at the bottom of the Ocean, the monsters are created; each region obeys you. You flow on—dreadful, unfathomed and solitary.

**Glorious mirror.**—The Ocean is taken to be the reflection of God's power and majesty. *Almighty's form*—the image of God. *Glasses*—reflects. *In tempest*—When the ocean is agitated by the tempest, it becomes sublime and awful. This awfulness of the Ocean is the manifestation of God's power. Notice here that Byron regards the sublime aspect of Nature as the expression of God's power. *Convulsed*—agitated. *In breeze*—i.e., when the Ocean remains calm under a gentle breath of air. *Gale*—heavy storm, i.e., when the Ocean is agitated by a heavy storm. *Icing the pole*—lying frozen round the pole. *Torrid clime*—tropical region (i.e., the hot countries on both sides of the Equator). *Dark-heaving*—It is a very appropriate epithet describing the swell of the water (of the Ocean) and its dark blue colour. *Boundless*—infinite. *Endless*—Byron wants to make a distinction between boundless and endless. He uses the former in the sense of having no boundaries and the latter in the sense of ever flowing on.

**The image of eternity**—the symbol of God who is infinite. It should be remarked here that this pantheistic reflection (or



the conception of the universe as a reflection of the Infinite God) which we do not find in Byron's earlier poetry, is due to his contact with Shelley. *The throne.....invisible*—The Ocean is regarded here as the very seat of Almighty God. *Slime*—fine oozy mud, etc., at the bed of the Ocean. *The monsters...deep*—the enormous creatures (whales, etc.) in the sea. *From out thy slime.....made*—Byron refers to an old idea that sea-monsters are made of sea-slime. *Zone*—region. *Goest forth*—flowest on. *Dread*—i.e., dreadful. *Fathomless*—immeasurable. [‘Fathom’ is a measure equal to six feet]

*In all time.....alone*—**Expl.** Byron regards the Ocean as the manifestation of the Infinite (i.e., God). Whether, the Ocean is calm when a gentle breeze is stirring, or agitated when a heavy storm is sweeping over it, whether it lies frozen round the pole or flows majestically in the tropic region, it is always the image and reflection of the infinite power of God, and is the seat of His Sovereignty. In fact, in all aspects and moods, unlimited, ever-flowing and dreadful as it is, the Ocean is the type and symbol of eternity. [It should be noted here that this is essentially a pantheistic attitude]

**St. 6. Substance**—[Byron used to love the Ocean even when he was a boy. If it inspired fear in him, it was a pleasing fear. He sported with the waves and they were a delight to him.]

**Paraphrase**—I have loved you, O, Ocean! and my delight was to float onward on thy breast in the sportive spirit of youth, like your bubbles. From my boyhood I played with your waves; they were to me an object of joy. If the raging sea made them terrible, it gave me a sensation of pleasure mixed with fear, for I was, as it were, your foster-child and entirely surrendered myself to your billows (waves) far and near and placed my hand on the crest of your waves as I do here.

*I have.....ocean* **N. B.**—Byron here speaks of his own delight in roaming over the Ocean. From his constant habit of sailing over it, he has learnt to love it. The early days of his youth have been passed over its bosom. And the Ocean has cast a spell upon him; the very fear which it inspires in his mind is not unmixed with joy. An exile as he is from human society, he can often soothe the anguish of his mind by throwing himself into the wild tumult of the Ocean.

*My joy...sports*—the pleasure that he has enjoyed from his youthful sports. *Was.....borne*—His joy was to float on the bosom of the sea. *Like.....bubbles*—Byron is evidently fond of comparing himself to the bubbles and we feel that no simile could have been more appropriate. First, on the bosom of the infinite Ocean, a man realises his own littleness and the insecurity of life. Like the bubbles that appear on the surface of the sea and instantly burst and disappear, a human being who roams over the sea cannot for a moment feel safe and may perish suddenly. *Wantoned*—sporting. *Breakers*—huge waves dashing upon the shore. *They...delight*—They filled my heart with joy. *Freshening*—raging; rushing towards the shore. *Made.....terror*—made the waves look terrible. *It.....fear*—The waves which rushed so terribly towards Byron inspired in his mind a mixed feeling of pleasure and fear. *For I was...thee*—I looked upon myself as your own child. Notice here that Byron claims a close kinship with the Ocean. He has no separate entity from the Ocean; rather he forms a part of it. *Trusted.....near*—As he looked upon himself as the child of the Ocean, he could venture himself upon it and roam far and wide. In other words, the Ocean has no terrors for him and he can entirely trust it. *Mane*—i. e., the crest of the waves. *As I...here*—Byron originally began the address to the Ocean from the Alban Mount; here we are to suppose that he sails upon it.

### Questions and Answers

Q. 1. Give the substance of Byron's address to the Ocean.

Ans. See *Central Thought*.

Q. 2. Write a short sketch of Byron's life and point out the chief features of his poetry.

Ans. See *Introduction*.

Q. 3. Write a note on Byron's Spenserian stanza.

Ans. See *Introduction*.

Q. 4. *Explain :—*

- (a) *The wrecks:.....unknown.*
- (b) *And send'st him.....let him lay.*
- (c) *These are.....spoils of Trafalgar.*
- (d) *Thou glorious mirror.....throne of the Invisible.*

*Ans. See Notes.*

Q. 5. *Annotate :—*

Bubbling groan ; playful spray ; oak leviathans ; yeast of waves ; Armada's pride ; Spoils of Trafalgar ; creation's dawn ; Icing the pole ; breakers.

*Ans. See Notes.*

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## P. B. Shelley (1792--1822).

**Life of Shelley.**—Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place, Sussex. He was educated at Eton and at University College, Oxford. Much of his early youth was devoted to writing worthless novels and poems, and he was expelled from Oxford for writing a pamphlet on atheism. Soon afterwards he eloped with Harriet Westbrook, a school-friend of his sister's, and daughter of a retired publican, and was disowned by his family. With her he led a wandering life, visiting Southey at Keswick, and taking part in various political and philanthropical undertakings in Ireland and Wales. In 1813, he published his first poem of promise, *Queen Mab*. In 1814, he fell in love with Mary Godwin, daughter of William Godwin, the philosopher, and Mary Wollstonecraft, and being by now estranged from Harriet, eloped with Mary to the continent.

On his return he published his first great poem *Alastor*, followed, in 1816, by the fine but tedious *Revolt of Islam* in the Spenserian stanza. Various circumstances, bad health, the suicide of his first wife, and the decision in Chancery that he was unfit to be the guardian of her (his first wife's) children, drove him abroad to Italy in 1818. Here he wandered about for four years, visiting Venice, Rome, Naples, and Pisa, and here also his greatest poems were composed, *Prometheus Unbound* (1818—19), the finest lyrical drama in European literature, the magnificent but gloomy tragedy of the *Cenci* (1819), *Ode to the West Wind* (1819), *Witch of Atlas* (1820), *Epipsychidion* (1820), and *Adonais* (1821), an elegy on the death of Keats.

In the summer of 1822, he was drowned in the Gulf of Spezia; his body was afterwards burned in the presence of Byron, with whom he had been living, and the ashes were deposited in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome. Shelley's work is inspired by an ardent love of humanity, and contains the most purely and intensely lyrical poetry of all English literature.

## OZYMANDIAS

**Date of the Poem**—The poem was written in 1817.

**Central Thought**—Ozymandias, (Shelley's own creation), a mighty monarch of Egypt, fondly believed that he was king of kings, and that none would ever equal him in power and glory. But all that now remains of a statue of him in the desert is a pair of vast and trunkless legs. The broken image of his face lies close by, half-buried in the sand, but the expression of that face is not easily to be forgotten with the frown, the curled lip, the scornful look of supreme authority, so powerfully expressed by the sculptor, and that expression of the face outlasts the sculptor who wrought the statue, and also the monarch who was the owner of the face. The sense of utter desolation which the scene suggests to the mind is heightened by the wild, lonely desert stretching away endlessly.

**Critical Remarks**—*We do not know whether we should call this poem a sonnet, though ostensibly it is one.* It defies all attempt at reducing it to a regular form. We wonder how Shelley, with his fine ear for rhythm, could have made 'stone' rhyme with 'frown', 'appear' with 'despair': we wonder still more how Shelley, with his marvellous lyric gift, could have floundered so miserably in writing a sonnet. But it is a very powerfully written poem, with a rare sublimity of imaginative conception. The last three lines are simply magnificent in their suggestion of utter desolation, which the endless stretch of sands makes the more impressive. The poem suggests also the pitiful irony of human ambitions.

**Metre and Versification**—The two divisions of a Petrarchan sonnet are (i) the *Octave* and (ii) the *Sestet*. The rhyme-scheme in the *Octave* (the first eight lines) is regular—*ab ba ab ba*—but in the *Sestet* (the next six lines) there may be any arrangement of rhymes. *Shelley's poem seems to be a sonnet on the Petrarchan (or Italian) model*, but it does not follow the rhyme-scheme of the *Octave* at all—in fact, it is hopeless to try to reduce Shelley's *Octave* to any rhyme-scheme. In the *Sestet* the poet is comparatively free, and may introduce any arrangement of rhymes; so it is immaterial how Shelley arranges the rhymes in the *Sestet*. The rhyme-scheme in the *Octave* is simply staggering—the first four lines have the bare

semblance of regularity, *ab ab*, but the next four lines rhyme *a c d c*! The line, of course, consists of five iambic feet; sometimes a trochee has been substituted in the first foot, and in the fourth foot, *e.g.* :—

Lo'ok on | my works, | ye Might | y and | despair  
Nothing | beside | remains. | Ro'und the | decây

### Analysis.

- (i) The report of a traveller from an antique land :—
  - (a) Two vast and trunkless legs of stone, standing in the desert.
  - (b) A broken image of the face, half-buried in the sand, depicting very powerfully the passions of anger, pride and supreme contempt.
  - (c) An inscription on the pedestal, proclaiming the name and the glory of the king whose statue lies in ruin.
- (ii) The endless stretch of sands, adding to the sense of desolation.

**Substance**—A traveller coming from Egypt said that he saw a pair of huge stone legs standing in the desert, and lying near it, the broken image of the face, which still retained very clearly its frown, curled lip, and a contemptuous look of supreme authority. The skill of the sculptor must have been great, indeed, to give such a life-like expression to that face. The inscription on the pedestal proclaimed the name and the glory of the king the ruin of whose statue stood there. The endless stretch of sands all about it emphasized only the sense of desolation.

**Paraphrase**—I met a traveller coming from an ancient country (*i.e.*, Egypt), and he said that he saw the ruin of a statue, all being gone except two huge legs, standing in the desert, and not far from them he saw also the broken image of the face, lying half-buried in the sand, but it was the life-like expression of the countenance which struck him most. The knitted brow, the curled lip, and the scornful look of supreme authority, were all there in the statue as fresh as ever, indicating how great the

skill of the sculptor must have been to represent on marble those passions so well as to make them outlast both the executor of them (*i.e.*, the sculptor) and the author of them (*i.e.*, the king). The traveller found these words inscribed on the pedestal—"My name is Ozymandias, the supreme of all monarchs. Let those who are great and powerful look on my achievements, and then pause whether they will ever be able to match them." Except this ruin of a statue nothing else is there. All about the huge remains, slowly sinking to earth, is the limitless expanse of the sandy desert, without a trace of vegetation, and so uniform in appearance.

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

*Antique*—ancient. *Antique land*—Here Egypt is meant. It was one of the countries, which attained a high degree of civilization long before the commencement of the Christian era. *Trunkless*—without the main part of the body. *Two.....stone*—It was the ruin of Ozymandias's statue that the traveller sees, but of the statue all had disappeared except a pair of huge legs left standing in the desert.

N. B.—If the poet had not given concrete details, of the ruined statue, the description would have failed to stir the imagination of the reader. The two vast and trunkless legs, standing in the desert, convey to the reader the actual desolation of the scene, and the colossal nature of the ruins.

*Half-sunk*—half-buried. *Shattered*—broken. *Visage*—the image of the countenance. Here the poet adds another concrete detail, which enables the reader to reconstruct the whole scene. *Frown*—knitted brow, expressive of displeasure. *Wrinkled lip*—lip curled up in contempt.

Cf.—"The lip of pride, the eye of flame  
The full-drawn lip, that upward curl'd  
The eye that seem'd to scorn the world."—*Scott*.

*Sneer of cold command*—a scornful look of supreme authority. 'Cold' suggests here *unfeeling*. *Tell*—indicate. *Sculptor*—the maker of the statue. *Those passions*—*i.e.*, anger, pride and scorn which the sculptor sought to express on the marble face. *Read*—interpreted.

*Whose frown.....read—Expl.* The sculptor succeeded in giving a very life-like expression to the countenance of the statue. The knit brow, the curled lip and the scornful look of supreme authority were all very skillfully executed on marble. It was surely a credit to the sculptor that he had interpreted so well the passions of anger, pride and scorn, but before doing that, he must have very closely studied those passions.

*Survive—outlast. Stamped—inscribed. On these lifeless things—i. e., on stone.* There is an implied contrast between 'survive' and 'lifeless'. On the *lifeless* stone the sculptor has given expression to some features of human passion, which will *live* for ever. *The hand.....them—i.e.,* the sculptor who represented them on marble. The part is used for the whole; therefore 'hand' may be taken as an instance of *Synecdoche*. *Mocked—imitated.* It seems to be a favourite word in this sense with Shelley.

*Cf.—*"And human hands first mimicked and then mocked  
With moulded limbs more lovely than his own,  
The human form, till marble grew divine."

—*Prometheus Unbound.*

*The heart.....fed—i.e.,* Ozymandias whose heart nourished those passions; 'heart' is also an instance of *Synecdoche*.

*Which yet survive...fed—Expl.* The shattered image of Ozymandias's face, which lies half-buried in sand, is the triumph of the sculptor's skill. It still does express displeasure (*frown*), pride (*wrinkled lip*) and a scornful look of superior authority. The sculptor who portrayed those passions is dead and gone; and so also the king (Ozymandias) whose heart nourished those passions then. Art has given life to these passions on stone (*i.e.,* in the statue), and they will live for ever.

**N.B.**—The poem may teach the lesson that human glory passes away, but in it there is one thing which has been persistently overlooked by the commentator as well as the reader. We mean *the best praise that has been uttered in any poem of the art of sculpture*, which has given life to that which is now no more. We think we shall better understand Shelley's spirit if we take the poem as a commentary on the art of sculpture rather



than seek to draw any moral lesson from it. Such truism as the vanity of human life and human greatness may well be, as it often is, the subject of Byron's song, but Shelley has little to do with it. The poem really celebrates the sculptor's skill which can give life to a thing that exists no more. This poem, if it is to be rightly understood, should be read with Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, which is essentially an art-poem, and which proves again how art gives permanence to the fleeting phenomena of life. If we compare the two poems, we shall find that Keats is more elaborate, that he dwells more on the outward form of life, which is painted on the Grecian Urn, but Shelley who barely touches on the skill of the sculptor, goes deeper into the matter—for in his poem it is not with the body only, but with the mind, that the artist has worked, and it is in depicting the inner life of the mind that his skill has been shown.

*Pedestal*—the base of the statue. *These words*—the words of the inscription. *Ozymandias*—No such king of the name existed; Ozymandias was, therefore, purely a creation of Shelley. *King of kings*—the most supreme of all reigning monarchs. *Look.....works*—Behold all that I have; take stock of all my achievements. *Ye Mighty*—all of you who are great and powerful. *Despair*—do not cherish any hope of ever equalling me in glory and power. It is this inscription which has led many into thinking that the aim of the poem is to suggest a moral lesson. The inscription, so absurdly boastful in spirit, is of a piece with the statue or the ruin of the statue, so absurdly huge.

*Nothing.....remains*—The ruin of the statue is the only sight to be seen there. The statue or rather the ruin of the statue stands there in its solitary greatness. *Decay*—i. e., the gradual crumbling away of the statue. *Colossal wreck*—the huge remnant of the statue. Each word in this line has its value; each word contributes to the impression of vastness and immensity. *Boundless*—limitless; refers to the limitless expanse of the sandy desert. *Bare*—absolutely void of vegetation. *Lone*—solitary; refers to the unbroken solitude of the desert. *Level*—i. e., presenting an uniform appearance. In whichever direction, one may turn his eyes, there are sands, and not any patch of verdure to relieve the sight. *Stretch*—spread.

*Round the decay.....far away—Expl.* That huge remnant of Ozymandias's statue, gradually crumbling away into dust, stands in the desert. in solitary greatness. All about it lies the endless stretch of sands, adding to the sense of desolation. Let any man picture the scene to his mind's eye, and he will realise what the effect is. There are sands, sands everywhere, and no patch of green anywhere to relieve the eye, and there stands the immense ruin of the statue, with the face lying on the ground near it—and such a face with all the terribleness of reality! It is a scene conceived and sketched with great imaginative power.

### Questions and Answers

Q. 1. Criticize "Ozymandias" as a Sonnet.

Ans. See Critical Remarks and Metre and Versification.

Q. 2. Give the substance of the poem.

Ans. See Substance.

Q. 3. The poem (Ozymandias) is the best commentary on the art of the sculptor—Discuss and illustrate.

Ans. See Notes.

Q. 4. What are the touches, in the poem, conveying a sense of lonely desolation?

Ans. See Critical Remarks and Notes.

Q. 5. Explain with reference to the context :—

(a) Near them.....passions read.

(b) Which yet survive.....that fed.

(c) Round the decay.....far away.

Ans. See Notes.

Q. 6. Annotate the following :—

Antique land ; sneer of cold command ; the hand that  
mocked them ; the heart that fed ; colossal wreck ;  
lone and level sands.

Ans. See Notes.

## THE CLOUD

**1. Date and Occasion.**—This beautiful lyric was composed in 1820 and published in the same year when Shelley was residing at Pisa in Italy. We learn from a stray note of Mrs. Shelley that the poet saw the cloud when he was sailing on the Thames in a boat. This might have been the germ of the poem; but this germ was developed at Pisa; and the descriptions of nature that we find in this poem are not of the Nature of England, but of that in the vicinity of Pisa.

**2. Critical Estimate**—"Early in 1820 the Shelleys removed into the 'peopled solitude' of Pisa. The first year of their residence there and among the hills hard by was pre-eminently the season of his *lyrics of Nature*. They are indeed closely linked with the great lyrical drama of 1819 (*Prometheus Unbound*). *The Cloud*, *The Skylark*, *The West Wind*, *Arethusa*, *The Witch of Atlas*, *The Sensitive Plant* carry on in detached strains of even richer beauty the elemental symphonies of the *Prometheus*. His mastery of form was now complete.....Nowhere else can we study so effectively the peculiar stamp of Shelley's imagination as in these marvels of 'poet's poetry'! *Where Wordsworth's imagination isolates and focusses, and Keats's fills in and enriches, Shelley's dissolves and transcends.*"—Herford.

"*The Cloud*" is a nature myth of flawless beauty. The complete identification of the poet with his subject, *the superb rush of music, the crystalline clearness of the picture*, not for a moment marred by an over-profusion of metaphors as in *The Skylark*, *these things make criticism tongue-tied*. Even to comment on its beauties is an impertinence. It is made for our wonder and delight".

**3. Shelley's Hellenism.**—*Shelley was deeply imbued with the spirit of Hellas (ancient Greece) and his poetry is saturated with his admiration of the Greek poets, and the Greek belief that all places are full of beautiful living spirits.* Shelley, to whom all medieval mythology was nothing but "superstition", found in the myths of Greece a world in which his imagination could range, and his profound religious instinct embody itself, secure from the paralysing virus of theological strife. He found beauty everywhere in this mystic universe, and he never felt alone, for he peopled every place with beautiful living forms. *In his 'Cloud'*

he represents Lightning as being in love with beautiful spirits—spirits of the ocean, rivers and mountains; and like his Lightning-he, too, was deeply in love with the mystic spirit of this universe and drank beauty from all the objects of Nature.

4. Shelley's attitude towards Nature—Like Wordsworth, Shelley believes that this Universe is pervaded by a living spirit which entering into lakes, rivers and mountains, etc., gives them each its own life. But there is just this difference between Wordsworth and Shelley. To Wordsworth Nature is one, but to Shelley she is many. Shelley believes that there are many living spirits though he believes that above all there is one spirit which is the essence of the Universe. Shelley is in some respects a Greek pagan in his attitude towards Nature.

Another characteristic that distinguishes Shelley from Wordsworth is that to Shelley Nature is only impulse, whereas to Wordsworth she is both impulse and law. Hence Shelley regards Nature essentially as the spirit of Love, whereas Wordsworth regards her as the embodiment of both Love and Thought.

Shelley is never so accurate an observer of Nature as Wordsworth. To him a cursory glance at Nature is enough. Vague impressions are what he cares for. His 'Cloud' gives us vague impressions of the shapes and beauties described by her. This very vagueness constitutes the beauty of Shelley's poetry for it has made his poetry highly suggestive.

Keats, though an ardent lover of Nature, sees only the outward beauty of Nature. Keats's descriptions of Nature are redolent of beauty—sensual beauty and charm. He never sees like Shelley the inner beauty in Nature,—he never feels the impulse of describing Nature as a living entity. Shelley delights in representing the facts and phenomena of Nature as so many objects of living beauty, as so many spirits whose colours are heavenly. He describes the sun rising early in the morning as a bright eagle with blood-red eyes. He represents the sea as sending forth the soft tender breeze out of the very depths of her heart, like a lady whispering soft words of love when her heart has been overpowered with emotions. His moon is a mysterious orb'd maiden; his rainbow a triumphal arch through which the mysterious cloud-lady marches like a

victorious Roman general; his lightning is in love with the beautiful spirits of the purple sea; thunder is a giant chained in a cavern roaring at intervals; his pines groan under the weight of hails; his sweet buds are awakened by bright rain-drops; his flowers are thirsting like maidens; his leaves enjoy their noon-tide siesta. In fact, he can never conceive of nature as a dead weight of mass. He is never a realist; idealism is his forte.

**5. Further Remarks on Shelley's Treatment of Nature—His power of making new myths.**—Shelley's impassioned treatment of Nature in his short poems varied according to the mood he was in. Sometimes he saw Nature as one and invisible; as a spiritual being, who through all her forms, while she remains inconceivable, exhales love and unity, 'spreads undivided, operates unspent',—and the Hymn to Asia—'Life of Life, thy lips enkindle'—is an example of this mood.

That is one form in which Shelley's lyric contemplation of Nature appeared. There are other lyrics which look on Nature, not as one being, but as many beings; in which every natural object or phenomenon has its own life, and acts and thinks and plays like a man or a child, without any conscience or self-consciousness, *in which Nature is seen, as the men of the mythical period saw her.*

*In the ancient myths the doings of Nature, and specially of the sky, are impersonated and described as the doings of men or animals.* The dawn is said to fly before the rising sun. The summer god contends with and conquers the winter, and is conquered in turn by the winter giants. The rays of the sun are the arrows of the sun-god. Such mythical representations have passed into modern poetry, even into our daily speech. But they exist in it chiefly in the form of adjectives, or in certain well-known images which science has never induced us to surrender. *But we make no new myths.* These impersonations of the doings of nature live no longer in the faith of reason. It is therefore with some wonder and much pleasure that in Shelley we find ourselves with a poet who was so detached from both the present and the past as to be frequently in the very position of mind in which an early Aryan

1. Shelley—a marker of new myths.

thought ; and therefore *Shelley was able to make new nature myths of his own*—to feel nature, and to see her doings as a child who belonged to the childhood of the world. Shelley did it quite naturally, exactly as a man three thousand years ago might have done it.

*"The Cloud" is the most astonishing example of the new myths made by Shelley. It is not only a myth of the Cloud ; the*

*The Cloud*—an example of this myth-making power.

*cloud is accompanied by a host of other impersonations of nature*—the sanguine sunrise with his meteor eyes, the orbéd maiden of the moon, the imprisoned giant of the thunder, the lightning which runs through the sky to

find his love,—all are touched into life, and yet there is not one phrase, not one adjective which is contradictory of, or which does not illuminate, natural fact.

As illustrations of this myth-making power many other poems may be quoted. But we hope we have said enough to show that Shelley has this myth-making power in him.

At other times Shelley sees and describes things in Nature as they are in themselves, as they were before myth-making man

2. Shelley's impersonal view of Nature.

• was born into the universe,—and as he describes, he himself is wholly detached from them. At any rate, he alone among the poets could see natural things, and choose some-

times to see them, as they were in themselves, wholly independent of our thought or feeling ; and he made poems on this vision of them. Not one suspicion of humanity belongs to them, not one word brings into them a shred of human feeling. For that reason, while we admire them, we do not love them, but their uniqueness and their strangeness is astonishing. Of these poems *'The Cloud' is the most finished example. The personages in it have no relation to humanity.*

*The Cloud*—an example of this impersonal view.

They are alive ; that is all the connection they have with us. They are purely elemental.

The sanguine sunrise, the meteor moon, the thunder in the caves of earth, the march of the clouds through the rainbow arch, the clouds building and unbuilding themselves in the air and laughing at their own tricks—it may all have occurred, and did occur, in the Silurian

period. There is not a word of human interest, not even a word which brings the poet himself into any relation with the object described. We are not conscious of Shelley at all as we read '*The Cloud*.'

This is a power which, as exercised by Shelley, belongs to him alone among the poets. There are few who can escape from their own self-consciousness or from the overwhelming consciousness of the world of humanity. Shelley, on the contrary, could strip himself clean of humanity and of Shelley, and move among the elements like one of themselves. Hence there arises this curious thing, that describing natural occurrences as if they were the doings of living things, and describing them in terms of the highest imagination, he yet, because he has wholly got rid of the deceiving mist of human emotion and thought concerning them, describes them with an accuracy which we might almost call scientific. *The Cloud* might be lectured upon by a meteorologist. [Adapted from Stopford Brooke's Essay on the Lyrics of Shelley in his *Studies in Poetry*—a book which the advanced student is advised to read.]

#### 6. Substance.—*The drift of the ideas in the poem:—*

N. B.—The student should remember that Shelley puts his thoughts in the mouth of the Cloud. His 'Cloud' is a mysterious lady who tells her own tale, and the poem is a sort of monologue.

*In the first stanza, the cloud is conceived of by the poet as a regenerating power in Nature.* It generates rain which refreshes the flowers, and gives them their very life as it were. At noon, the cloud creates light shade for the leaves who sleep quietly undisturbed by winds, and dream sweet dreams. It also causes bright dew-drops to fall on the eyes of sweet birds (or 'buds' if we accept the reading of 1839), which awaken them from their sleep early in the morning when they are lulled to sleep on their mother's breast by the gentle winds of heaven. Then again the cloud brings forth hail which strikes hard against the ground like lashes, and whitens the green plains with snow.

*Next (in the second stanza) the cloud is conceived of as a destroying power of Nature,—*sublimely beautiful with all its associates. It causes blasts which rend the snow on the mountains. The masses of snow then roll down the sides of mountains overgrown with pine trees, often crushing these trees which tremble with fear. In the midst of this turmoil of Nature, the cloud hangs

on the sides of mountains in her mysterious bower 'in the sky. Lightning, the pilot of the cloud, sits on the towers of this bower, while terrific thunder is chained in some cavern below from which, like a giant it sends forth its roar at intervals, as it struggles to set itself free. Lightning is in love with the beautiful spirits of the Earth and Water, and conducts the lady cloud always over rivers and mountains, and over earth and ocean—in fact, to whatever place the spirit he loves, is fancied to live. After some time lightening dissolves in rains, but the cloud always enjoys the genial warmth of the sky.

*In the third stanza, the cloud is conceived of by the poet as a beautifying principle in Nature, glorying in the works of her own creation. Early in the morning when the sun rises in his morning splendour, the golden beams of the sun fall on the clouds that have gathered round the bright disc of the sun, and seem to dance and quiver there like the bright wings of the Eagle when it rests on a crag which is being violently shaken by an earthquake. At sunset again when a soft tender breeze blows from the sea and the red curtain of heaven falls upon the earth, the cloud, bright with the glory of the sunset, rests on the evening sky still and motionless like a brooding dove. At night, again, when the moon rises, and the stars shine out, the cloud stretches herself forth, and when the sky is strewn over with patches of fleecy clouds, the whole host of stars, moon and clouds are reflected upon the still glassy surface of rivers, lakes and seas below, and give them each the appearance of a portion of the sky.*

Early in the morning, the cloud gathers round the throne of the sun-god and forms his broad golden belt. At night again she gathers round the moon, and forms the pearl-white halo of glory round her. How after the work of destruction has been over, and even while she destroys, she makes the Earth shine again with glory! When the hurricane comes, the whole sky is overcast with dark masses of clouds, which stretch forth endlessly and look like a bridge over the sea joining cape to cape. Then when the storms are over, bright drops of rain fall from the clouds, and intercept the sun's rays, thus producing the most beautiful phenomenon of Nature—the million-coloured rain-bow, whose soft colours are woven by the 'sphere fire above while the moist earth is laughing below.'



*In the concluding stanza, her origin and her ever-during character are dwell upon.* She is the daughter of Earth and Water in as much as she is formed by the water vapour under the radiation of the heat of the Earth, and she is the nursling of the sky for she is brought up there. Hers is an everlasting life; she changes but cannot die. And when after the storms are over, and the whole sky seems to be smiling with brightness, and the winds and sun-beams build up in the sky a blue dome of air—the cenotaph of the cloud as it were,—the cloud laughs at this, and suddenly springing into existence destroys this work of the winds and sun-beams, and the sky is again overcast with masses of clouds.

**7. Metre.**—This beautiful lyric defies all attempts at regular scansion. It is a mixture of different varieties of metre, the principal of which are iambus, and anapæst.

I bring | fresh sho'w | ers for | the thi'rst | ing flow'ers |  
 From the sea's | and the strea'ms |  
 I be'ar | ligh't sh'ade | for the le'aves | when la'id |  
 In their no'on | day drea'ms |

Again :—

I si'ft | the sno'w | on the mou'n | tains belo'w | etc.

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

**St. 1.** *The cloud is one of the refreshing principles of Nature.*

**Substance**—The cloud discharges drops of rain which awaken and refresh the thirsty flowers. It also gives light shade to the leaves at noon. In the morning it causes the dew drops to fall and waken young birds and buds. It also causes hails which cover the ground with snow, but this snow again is dissolved in rains.

**Paraphrase**—(*The cloud speaks*) I bring refreshing showers of rain from the seas and the rivers for the flowers which seem to be thirsting for them, and by the action of these bright rain-drops, flowers are awakened from their sleep, and look

fresh and beautiful. I also give light shade to leaves when they lie quiet at noon as in a dream. Then again the dews that awaken every one of the sweet birds (or buds) from sleep when early in the morning they are rocked to rest on their mother's breast by the gentle breezes that begin to blow as the earth is overflowed with light—these dews are shaken from my wings. The fierce hail which falls with force on the ground and whitens it with snow is my doing. The snow again is dissolved in rain, and I assume a bright glow as I pass away triumphantly with the noise of the thunder.

*I bring fresh showers for.....flowers*—Here the poet refers to the fact that flowers cannot grow unless they are watered. The rain drops falling from the clouds provide nourishment to the flowers. The flowers are, as it were, in a parched state, and are thirsting for rain-drops. The cloud brings shower after shower to allay the thirst of the flowers. *I*—i.e., the cloud.

*Thirsting flowers*—Notice that Shelley attributes human feeling to inanimate objects. Like Wordsworth, Shelley believes that all Nature is alive, and the flowers and plants are capable of feeling pleasure and pain like human beings. The flowers are thirsting for rain, and it is the cloud which sending forth shower after shower satisfies their thirst. Cf. the expression "Rain-awakened flowers" in Shelley's *Skylark*.

*From the seas and the streams*—Shelley in the mouth of the cloud puts here a well-known fact of science—the formation of clouds, and the causes of rain. By the power of the sun's rays, the waters of rivers and seas are converted into water vapour and ultimately into clouds which, as soon as they come in contact with cooler currents of air, are dissolved into rain.

*I bear light shade.....dreams*—At noon when the atmosphere is calm and quiet, leaves seem to enjoy a sweet sleep, and at such a time it is the cloud that mercifully spreads a gentle shadow over their heads—thus enabling them to sleep and dream all the more soundly. The plain fact is that at noon clouds pass and repass; sometimes they obscure the sun so that a gentle shade is caused. Shelley poetically says that such shades are caused by the clouds as they feel for the poor leaves who require slumber at noon. The whole thing is a beautiful poetic fancy. *I*—i.e., the cloud.

*Light*—soft; gentle. *Noonday dreams*—Notice again this attribution of human feeling to the so-called inanimate objects of Nature. The leaves hanging without any motion in the quietness of the noon, are conceived of by Shelley as so many persons *sleeping quietly and dreaming dreams*.

*From my wings are shaken the dews*—The cloud is compared here to a bird, which shakes from its wings bright dewdrops. The plain meaning is that the dew comes from the clouds. *Waken*—rouse from the sleep.

**The sweet birds**—N.B.—This is the reading of the 1820<sup>th</sup> edition of Shelley's work; and it is curious that our University editors have retained it. 'Birds' in the edition of 1820, appeared surely as a misprint for 'buds' which is the reading of the corrected edition of Shelley's work that was published in 1839; and all great editors of Shelley—Buxton Forman and others—have adopted this corrected reading in their editions. Incorrect or otherwise, it is the misfortune of annotators of University Texts to explain everything; and so we shall try to make out the meaning of it.

(1) If we adopt the reading 'birds'—then the meaning of the passage would be :—the dew drops fall on the eyelids of the sweet young birds and awaken them early in the morning when they are lulled to sleep on their mother's breast.

*Rocked*—moved forward and backward, and thus lulled to sleep.

*As she dances.....sun*—When the sun rises, the mother bird leaves her nest and dances about the sun. The little ones on her breast are rocked backward and forward, and are thus lulled to rest. But soon the dew drops fall on their eyelids, and their sleep is broken.

N.B.—The expression 'mother's breast' gives some difficulty. Does Shelley mean the mother bird or simply mother Earth?—The latter meaning is to be preferred. See note below.

(2) But if we adopt the reading 'buds' which is the more beautiful and poetic of the two, then the meaning would be :—The bright dew drops fall on the petals of sweet young flowers and rouse them from their sleep, (i.e., make them full blown)

just when under the influence of the soft gentle breezes of the morning they are being rocked to and fro, and the mother Earth is smiling and dancing in the bright light of the rising sun.

In plain English, the lines would mean that when the sun rises in the morning the Earth is flooded with light; and soft gentle breezes begin to blow. At such a time the sleeping flowers look like so many beautiful children sleeping in sweet repose in their mother's (Earth's) arms. They are roused from their sleep when dew drops fall from the clouds upon them.

Here '*mother's breast*' would surely refer to the Earth. The Earth is called the mother of the flowers for the flowers have sprung into existence out of it. [Some commentators, however, take '*mother*' to mean the flower plant or even big flowers which are dancing in the sun's rays.] *She*—i.e., Earth.

*She dances about the sun*—She (Earth) is flooded with a flood of light, and seems to dance in joy with all her flowers and plants as they are moved to and fro by the gentle breezes of the morning. *Dances about the sun*—There may be a reference here to the Earth's revolution round the sun.

*Wield*—hold; sway. *Flail*—a threshing instrument. *Lashing hail*—the hail sending bits of snow which strike hard against the ground on which they fall.

*I wield the flail.....hail*—I work the threshing instrument that sends down strong showers of hail. *In other words*, the strong bits of snow scattered by the hail fall like a threshing instrument upon a thing, and seem to crush it to pieces. But the hails, themselves, are the work of the cloud. The cloud is the cause of hails.

*Whiten the green plains under*—cover with white snow the plains overgrown with green grass. *Under*—below.

*And then again.....thunder*—The snow covering the ground becomes dissolved in rain again; or the bits of snow falling upon the ground become dissolved as rain falls from the clouds. [The student must have observed that particles of snow first fall upon the ground during storms; but after a time these particles are dissolved in rain.]

*Laugh*—The cloud is made very bright by lightning, and so the poet says that it laughs when it passes with the noise of thunder. *Thunder*—thunder-storms.

**St. 2—***The cloud as destroying power in Nature.*

**Substance**—The cloud sends blasts which rend asunder the snow deposited on the tops of mountains which falls furiously below crushing the pine trees. The cloud also brings storms and thunder accompanied with lightning which guides it over earth and ocean; and while the lightning disappears in rains, the cloud warms itself in the blue smile of heaven.

**Paraphrase**—The cloud sends forth blasts and thunder-storms which divide the snow deposited on the tops of mountains. This mass of snow being thus parted falls furiously below in the shape of an avalanche, and crushes in its passage the pine trees which have grown in abundance on the sides of the mountains. Again, the cloud stopped midway hangs over the heaps of snow on the mountains and is suspended in the air by the blasts that rage all around. Thus it seems to sleep in the arms of the blast resting its head upon the mass of snow. Overhead in the topmost parts of the sky is seen Lightning, which is represented by the poet as the pilot or the guide of the cloud (as it seems to light up its passage by sending forth flash after flash). Thunder is represented as living in an imprisoned state in a cavern under the skiey bowers of the cloud, struggling and howling at irregular intervals as if always anxious to make itself free and come out. The cloud is next represented by the poet as being driven by its pilot (or guide) Lightning across the sky over earth and ocean to which he is attracted by the spirits that live in the depths of the purple sea. Nay, the spirit with which Lightning is in love is to be found in all places,—in the rills, crags, hills, lakes and plains, etc.—and over all these Lightning is conducting the cloud sending forth flash after flash that illumines all these places. Then rain sets in, the lightning gradually disappears, but cloud lies all the while under the warmth of the blue sky above.

*Sift*—separate 'or divide (*i.e.*, rend asunder). *On the mountains below*—the snow that has been deposited on the tops of the mountains. *Below*—below the cloud. *Their great pines*—lofty pine trees growing on the sides of the mountains.

**N.B.**—The scenery is certainly Italian. Wherever the poem might have been composed, it is sure that Shelley was describing the passage of the cloud over the mountains of Italy whose sides are overgrown with pine forests. *Aghast*—terrified. *Groan aghast*—The snow on the mountain is parted by blasts and it begins to rush along the sides of the mountains in masses. It then rushes upon the great pine trees growing on the sides of the mountains, and produces a crashing sound (which appears like the groans of a man when he is almost crushed under the weight of a heavy burden).

*And all the night.....blast*—The cloud is represented by the poet as resting its head upon the mass of snow on the mountains, suspended by the blasts. The *plain meaning* is that under the force of the blasts the cloud is driven high up in the air till it touches the mass of snow and rests there. But how can it rest there unless it is supported by something? It is the blasts that support it. Hence the poet beautifully imagines that the cloud is sleeping in the arms of the blasts, with its head resting upon the mass of snow which serves the purpose of a pillow.

*It is my pillow white*—The white mass of snow serves as my pillow. *Blast*—thunder-storms. *Sublime*—used in the Latin sense of "up-lifted", high. *Towers*—tops. *Skiey bowers*—dwelling places in the sky. *Bower*—The cloud is represented as a lady sitting in her bower, and the bower in this case is the upper region of the sky. Just as a high-born lady sits in her apartment in the castle, so the cloud is sitting in the bower of the sky. This is a very beautiful poetic fancy. And the fancy becomes more beautiful when the poet imagines 'Lightning' as sitting on the 'towers' of the 'bowers' of the cloud to conduct her wherever she may desire to go. *Pilot*—guide, because lightning by sending forth constant flashes makes the path of the cloud clear in the sky. *Cavern*—hollow. *Under—either* (1) in the sky but under the bowers of the cloud, *i.e.*, in the lower regions of the sky (for the sound of thunder seems always to come from a nearer region), *or* (2) under the earth (for the sound of thunder seems to come from the hollow depths of the earth, and the whole earth is shaken as soon as a clap of thunder is heard). *Fettered*—bound in chains. *Struggles*—

to set itself free from the dungeon where it lies in an imprisoned state. *Howls*—rumbles; sends forth deep sounds. *At fits*—at irregular intervals.

**N.B.**—By very beautiful poetic imagery Shelley likens the cloud to a lady sitting in her bowers in the sky. Overhead is lightning, her guide, while the giant thunder has been kept in chains below in a cavern. The plain meaning is that the cloud is sometimes accompanied by thunder and lightning, but the flashes of lightning are seen up in the air, whereas the rumblings of thunder seem to come from the very depths of the earth. Thunder has been kept in chains because of its great destructive powers; were it set free, the whole world would have come to ruin.

*With gentle motion*—softly and gently. *This pilot*—Lightning which shows the path of the cloud, and is represented by the poet as its guide. *Lured*—attracted. **N.B.**—But who is lured,—The Lightning or the Cloud? It is difficult to say. (1) If 'lured' goes with 'lightning' (which is more probable) then the passage means—Lightning being in love with the beautiful spirits of the sea is conducting the cloud over there. (2) But if 'lured' goes with 'the cloud' (which too gives a very good sense) then we are to suppose that the lady cloud is in love with the spirits of the sea.

*Genii*—spirits. **N.B.**—The student should note that Shelley was deeply imbued with the spirit of classical poetry, he considered all Nature to be peopled with beautiful spirits. To him, there was no place that had not its presiding deity.

*Purple Sea*—The Sea is blue, but it becomes purple coloured when the lightning flashes across its blue surface. *Rills*—small streams. *Crags*—rocks. *Wherever he dreams etc.*—The construction is: (Lightning is guiding the cloud) under mountain or stream, etc., in fact, wherever he dreams (fancies, *i.e.*, according to his fancy) the spirit he loves remains.

*Dreams*—fancies. *The spirit*—the spirit of the universe, or the beautiful spirit with whom Lightning is in love.

**N.B.**—This illustrates Shelley's *Pantheism*. He, like Wordsworth, believed that this world is permeated by a spirit, the spirit of Beauty or Love. Lightning is in love with this spirit, and hence he is conducting the cloud to the abode of this spirit.

The plain fact that all the places of the earth seem to be illuminated when lightning flashes, is thus poetically stated by Shelley.

*Bask*—get dry and warm ; live in warmth. *He*—lightning.

*Dissolving in rains*—**Expl.** After some time lightning disappears in rains, but the cloud always enjoys the genial warmth of the blue sky. The cloud does not leave the sky though lightning falls on the hills, the ocean, and other places of the earth.

**Stanza 3.**—*A description of the sunrise, sunset, and moon-rise, and how the cloud adds glory to them.*

**Substance**—Early in the morning when the sun rises, the golden rays of the sun, falling upon the cloud, quiver there and make a very beautiful phenomenon. In the evening when a soft gentle breeze blows from the sea, the cloud rests on the face of the sky calm and motionless like a brooding dove. Then again at night when the moon rises, and the stars shine out, the cloud becomes scattered in the sky, and through the small patches of fleecy clouds the moon and the stars are reflected on the still surface of the waters below.

**Paraphrase**—Early in the morning, when the morning star Venus grows dimmer and dimmer and pales before the greater glory of the morning sun, the bright golden rays of the blood-red sun pierce through the broken and fleecy clouds drifting across the sky, and dance and quiver there like the golden wings of an eagle when it sits upon a rock which is being violently agitated by earth-quake. In the evening, again, when the sea sends forth from its sparkling bosom currents of cool refreshing air which blow gently like the soft accents of a lover overpowered with emotion, and the face of the earth and sky is covered by Heaven with a bright red curtain of glory, then the cloud rests on the face of the sky with her wings folded, as still and motionless as a dove sitting gently upon her egg.

After sunset, comes night when the moon with her silvery orb and bright arrows of beams glides silently through small patches of clouds which have been scattered over the sky by midnight breezes. In her tender glory the moon cuts her way across the sky producing a soft sweet chime which is heard



only by angels. Her footsteps break the thin tent of the cloud, and the broken patches of clouds then sail along the sky through which stars peep and peer, and move and fly rapidly like a swarm of golden bees. Gradually the breaches widen, and the whole host of stars and moon, and clouds are reflected on the still glossy surface of the rivers, lakes and seas which consequently look like fragments of the blue sky above with the moon and the stars shining on them, and the cloudlets sailing across.

[N. B.—This stanza describes the cloud (1) in the morning, (2) in the evening and (3) at night.]

*Sanguine*—red. [Lit. full of blood, bloody; hence having the colour of blood, i.e., red.] *Meteor eyes*—bright, dazzling eyes like the shooting stars (meteor). The eyes of the sun would refer either to its bright rays, or its bright appearance. *Burning plumes*—bright, fiery feathers. The sun scattering golden rays early in the morning has been compared to a bird—the Eagle, with golden wings. Notice the boldness of Shelley's imagery. *Outspread*—spread out. *Sailing rack*—thin, broken patches of cloud sailing or drifting across the sky. *Leaps..... rack*—The golden rays of the sun fall on the patches of clouds sailing across the sky, and seem to dance there giving it a very beautiful appearance. *The morning star*—Venus which rises just before dawn. *Shines dead*—grows dimmer and dimmer; loses its lustre in the morning and becomes pale (like one dead) owing to the brighter light of the sun. *As*—just as. *Jag*—projecting point; projection. *Crag*—rough steep rock. *Rocks*—moves; shakes. *Swings*—shakes. *Alit*—having alighted, or come down. *Its golden wings*—the bright plumes of the Eagle.

*The sanguine...wings*—**Expl.** Shelley here puts the description of a splendid sunrise in the mouth of the cloud. The cloud thus describes the sunrise:—The sun rises early in the morning with his deep red rays, his eyes blood-red and dazzling like shooting stars; and the golden rays of the sun fall and dance upon small patches of clouds sailing across the sky, and Venus, the morning star, pales before the intense light of the sun. The golden rays of the sun look like the golden wings of an eagle that seems to dance as it perches upon the projection of some rock which is being violently shaken by the force of an earthquake.

Notice carefully the different points of comparison. The golden rays of the sun quivering from beyond the fleecy clouds early in the morning have been compared to the golden feathers of an eagle, that quiver as the eagle just sits upon some rock which is being violently agitated by an earthquake. The imagery is splendid. The points of comparison are:—The sun = the Eagle. The golden rays of the sun = the bright feathers of the Eagle. The eyes of the sun (its bright disc or its bright appearance) = the shooting eyes of the Eagle. The cloud = the projection of a rock. The light of the sun dancing upon the clouds = the feathers of the Eagle quivering upon the rock as the rock is violently agitated by an earth-quake.

*Breathe*—Notice how beautifully this one word suggests to the mind of the reader an atmosphere of calm and quiet. The Sea in the evening seems to send a soft, gentle breeze which moves like the gentle whisper of lovers. *Lit Sea*—the sea lighted up by the golden rays of the setting sun. Sunrise and sunset look all the more splendid on the breast of the ocean. *Ardours*—warmth of passion or feeling.

*Breathe.....its ardours of rest and of love*—*Expl.* The Sea, the poet means to say, sends forth a soft gentle breeze which the poet likens to the soft accents of a lover (overpowered with the feeling of love as she rests on the breast of her beloved). Just as a lover overpowered by emotions whispers gentle accents of love and peace to her beloved, and the words seem to come out of the deep bottom of the heart, so the sea sends forth, from her very heart as it were, a soft, tender breeze. The imagery is very beautiful. The plain meaning is that in the evening a soft, tender breeze rises out of the sea and begins to blow over the earth bringing to our mind feelings of love and peace.

*Crimson pall*—red covering. In the evening, the sky becomes red. Hence the poet thinks that the goddess of evening drops a red curtain over the earth from the sky. Another very beautiful conception. *Folded*—closed; not spread out. The cloud seems to rest on the face of the sky; it does not sail along the sky. *Aery nest*—the “skiey bowers” of St. 2. The cloud is here compared to a bird, enjoying rest in the nest. *As still*—as calm and motionless. *Brooding dove*—a dove sitting upon her eggs in order to hatch them. The cloud seems to rest quietly in the

sky like a brooding dove. The dove is noted for its gentleness and is the type of modesty and love.

*That orb'd maiden*—the moon with her silvery orb or disc ; or *orb* may refer to the *halo* round the moon. *White fire*—the silvery rays of the moon. *With white fire laden*—laden with white fire, i.e., sending forth her silvery beams. The fire refers to the arrows of Diana, the moon goddess. *Mortals*—human beings. *Whom mortals call the Moon*—Notice that the objects of Nature have got different names among themselves. We call the moon, the moon ; but to the cloud, the moon is the maiden with her silvery rays. Shelley has poetic names for the beautiful phenomena of Nature.

*Glides glimmering*—silently moves across the sky emitting a feeble light. *Fleece-like floor*—white thin layers of clouds like the fleece of sheep. *Strewn*—scattered.

**N. B.** The student must have noticed thin patches of white clouds gently sailing across the sky in some clear night.

*Beat*—sound of the footstep of the moon ; the chiming of the moon. **N. B.**—Shelley is referring here to the Pythagorean doctrine of the music of the spheres. According to Pythagoras (an ancient Greek philosopher) the heavenly bodies (i.e., planets etc.) are presided over by angels, who, as the spheres revolve together, produce sweet music inaudible to mortal ears. So the moon also produces a sweet music which is heard only by the angels, and not by the sinful creatures of this earth.

*Unseen*—invisible. *Which only the angels hear*—the music of the spheres heard only by angels (see note above). *Woof*—texture ; web. *May have broken etc.*—Small patches of clouds are seen moving across the sky. Shelley very beautifully imagines that these cloudlets have been scattered simply because the tent of the cloud (formed by cloudlets) has been broken by the moon in the course of her journey across the sky. Students must have observed the phenomenon of the moon stooping through fleecy clouds in some clear night.

*Peep behind her*—peep behind the moon. *Peer*—look narrowly or closely. *Them*—the stars. *Whirl*—move swiftly. *Flee*—disappear swiftly. *Rent*—breach ; opening. *Wind-built tent*—the tent that has been formed by the clouds as they were

driven together by the force of the winds. *Strips of the sky*—The calm rivers, lakes and seas look like so many portions of the sky because on them have been reflected the small patches of clouds, the moon and the stars. *Through me*—through the fleecy cloud. *Page with*—decorated with; strewn with. *And these*—and the stars.

*Till the calm rivers.....these*—**Expl.** The cloud is describing here the reflection of the moon and the stars on the surface of the rivers, lakes or seas. Small patches of fleecy clouds sail across the sky and the moon throws out glimmering beams upon them. These patches of clouds are again broken at places, and through the openings thus made the stars peep out. Gradually these openings (or breaches) widen more and more till the whole sky is full of them; and then the stars shine out and the reflection of the cloudlets, stars and the moon falls upon the gentle surfaces of the rivers, lakes and seas, and gives them the appearance of portions of the sky itself. [The plain meaning is that the blue sky with its stars, moon and clouds, is reflected on the blue surface of the water.]

**St. 4.**—*The cloud gives beauty to the sun and the moon, and is the cause of the rainbow.*

**Substance.**—At sunrise the cloud gathers round the bright disc of the sun, and forms a glowing red belt; so at night it forms a white belt round the moon which we call the halo round the moon. It looks like a bridge when it is driven across the sky by the force of the hurricane and the whole sky is overcast with it. Then again, when storms are over, the rain-drops falling from the clouds intercept the rays of the sun, and thus the most beautiful phenomenon of Nature—the glorious rainbow, is caused.

**Paraphrase**—Early in the morning when the sun rises, clouds gather round it in the shape of a burning belt; and at night they gather round the moon and form a pearl-white bright girdle. When the whirlwinds blow and the sky is overcast with clouds driven across the sky with might and main, the fires in the volcanoes become dim and the stars seem to tremble in the sky. The whole sky is covered with masses of clouds floating swiftly across it, and stretching over the rushing waters of the sea, the clouds look like a bridge joining one cape with

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another. The rays of the sun cannot penetrate through them, and thus, unaffected by the sunbeams, the masses of clouds remain in the sky suspended like a roof supported by the column-like mountains. Then again when the storms are almost over, bright rain-drops fall from the clouds and (intercepting the sun's rays) they form the glorious rain-bow which looks like an arch of victory through which like a victorious Roman general, the cloud passes with hurricane, lightning and hail, in a chariot borne by the winds.

*I bind.....Zone*—When the sun rises early in the morning, masses of clouds gather round the disc of the sun, and form a glorious belt. *Burning Zone*—a red fiery belt.

**N. B.**—The sun is compared to a monarch whose belt is formed by the clouds.

*Girdle of pearl*—This is the halo round the moon which is also formed by clouds that have gathered round the moon. This halo looks like a belt of white pearls, because the moon-beams are silver white.

**N. B.**—Just as the sun in the preceding line has been compared to a monarch, so here in this line the moon is compared to a queen whose girdle or belt is formed by white clouds that have gathered round her.

*The volcanoes are dim*—The fires in the volcanoes become dim when the sky is overcast with clouds. Shelley here beautifully describes a hurricane. There is no description proper; there are only hints and suggestions. *The stars reel and swim*—When the whole sky is overcast with masses of clouds passing swiftly across it (the sky) because they (the clouds) are being driven by storm, the stars seem to quiver and move rapidly across the sky. *Reel and swim*—tremble because they are seen through revolving clouds. *The volcanoes.....swim*—The cloud means to say here that when the sky is overcast with clouds, and whirlwinds carry them round and round, even burning volcanoes appear to have a dim lustre, and the stars seem to tremble and move unsteadily. Shelley is describing here the power or force of a hurricane. *Unfurl*—stretch out. *When.....unfurl*—when the banner of the cloud is stretched at its full length by the whirlwinds. The plain meaning is:—The whirlwinds drive the clouds across the sky, and

the whole sky is overcast with dense masses of black clouds. *Whirlwinds*—masses of air moving rapidly round and round. *From cape to cape*—joining one cape with another; the cloud stretches from one cape to another looking like a connecting bridge. *With a bridge-like shape*—looking like a bridge over the sea. *Torrent sea*—the rushing water of the sea; the sea rushing furiously because its surface has been violently agitated by storms.

*Sun-beam proof*—not dissolved by the sun-beam. The sun's beams cannot penetrate through the clouds. *Hang*—is suspended in the sky. *Like a roof.....be*—The clouds form like a roof. But a roof is supported upon pillars. In the case of the clouds, it is the mountains which look like so many supporting pillars of the clouds. Shelley here means to say that when the storms blow furiously, the clouds are driven high above the mountains and the mountains look like so many columns, supporting the roof formed by clouds suspended in the sky.

*The triumphal arch*—This is the rain-bow which looks like an arch raised up in some town to welcome its victorious general. *N.B.*—The allusion is here to the Roman custom of honouring a victorious general who entered the city in triumphal procession. Just as some victorious general (like Julius Cæsar) had to enter the city in a triumphal procession, with captives chained to his chariot and with spoils of war, and he had to pass through arches erected in his honour, so also the cloud marches victorious through the rainbow (triumphal arch) with all the powers of the air bound to her chariot.

*I march*—Notice that Shelley compares the cloud to a victorious general. *Hurricane, fire and snow*—These accompany the cloud in her triumphal march across the sky. *Fire* refers to lightning, *hurricane* refers to storms, and *snow* refers to hails. *The powers of the air etc.*—The winds of heaven that carry the chariot of the cloud like captive kings carrying the chariot of some victorious Roman general. *Chained*—bound. *Chair*—The reference is to the car of victory in which the Roman general entered the city, and which was carried by the slaves of the war (the captive kings and chiefs). [The winds driving the clouds across the sky are compared to so many slaves carrying the chariot of the victorious Roman general.]

**Million-coloured bow**—the rainbow with its rich variety of colours. [There are actually seven colours in the rainbow, as Science tells us.] **The sphere-fire**—the sphere made of fire, i.e., the sun. **Its**—i.e., the rainbow's. **The sphere.....wove**—The soft colours of the rainbow were woven by (made of) the light of the sun. **N.B.**—Shelley is here referring to the reason as to how rainbows are caused. The rain-bow is formed when the sun's rays are intercepted by rain-drops (which make the earth moist, as is stated by the poet in the next line).

**Moist earth**—the earth that has been rendered moist by rain-drops. **Was laughing below**—When the rainbow appears in the sky with all its wealth of varied colours, the earth seems to be laughing in delight, as the soft sunbeams falling upon the earth make it extremely beautiful.

**Stanza 5.**—*The cloud describes how she is formed.*

**Substance.**—The cloud is the daughter of earth and water and the nursling of the sky. It passes through the pores of the ocean and shores. It may change its shape, but it can never die.

**Paraphrase.**—The cloud is the daughter of the earth and water and the nursling of the sky, inasmuch as she is formed from the water-vapour which rises from the waters of the Sea and the Earth, and this water-vapour passing to the sky forms the cloud (the sky is thus the nurse of the cloud). She goes up as water-vapour through the minute openings (pores) of the ocean and shores under the influence of heat. She changes her shape, as when she (the cloud) is dissolved in rains, but she cannot die as she again rises as water-vapour and is re-converted into the cloud. After rains and storms, the sky becomes clear and free from clouds, and regains its natural blue colour, the wind blows gently, and the sun-beams brighten up the deep blue surface of the sky. Then the cloud laughs at the picture of her supposed tomb (as the sky is nothing but her grave from which her remains have been removed and buried elsewhere for a time), and coming out of the caverns of rain, like a child coming out of its mother's womb, or like a ghost rising from the grave, the cloud appears again and destroys it (the blue canopy of air) again.

*Daughter of the Earth and Water*—The cloud is made of water vapour rising from Earth and Water (seas, oceans, etc.) under the influence of radiation.

*Water*—seas, oceans, etc.

*Nursling of the sky*—because the cloud is formed and brought up in the sky. The sky is the nurse which brings up the cloud. *Pores*—minute openings. *I pass through.....ocean and shores*—I (i.e., the cloud) rise as water vapour through the pores (i.e., minute openings) of the ocean and shores, and again I fall as rain and enter the ocean and shores through these minute openings.

*I change but cannot die*—**Expl.** The cloud may sometimes change its shape as when it is dissolved into rain but it can never die inasmuch as it is sure to be formed again. So the cloud says that she can never be destroyed though she takes many shapes.

**N. B.**—The student will remember the first important formula in science.—Nothing is created, nothing destroyed—all things remain in some form or other.

*Stain*—spot. *With never a stain*—The poet refers to the appearance of the sky after the rains are over. The sky regains its deep blue colour; there seems to be no stain or spot in it.

*Pavilion*—canopy, covering, or tent. *Is bare*—is unclouded; is free from clouds.

*Convex gleams*—the rays of the sun falling upon the earth obliquely. *Convex*—curved. *Blue dome of air*—i.e., the blue sky.

*Cenotaph*—sepulchral monument of a person whose body has been buried elsewhere; tomb from which one has arisen. The blue sky is called the cenotaph of the cloud for the cloud has been dissolved into rain, and is lying in the ocean or upon the earth and not in the sky, so the sky looks like the tomb of the cloud. *Caverns of rain*—the earth and the ocean where the rain-drops have fallen. These rain-drops will again be formed into vapours, and lead to the formation of clouds. *From the womb*—the earth and water whose daughter the cloud is. *Tomb*—the earth and the water again where the cloud lies



buried in the shape of rain water. *Arise*—am formed again. *Unbuild it again*—destroy the blue dome of air by covering the sky again with dense masses of clouds. *It*—the blue dome of the sky. *Like a child.....tomb*—Notice the beauty of the imagery, especially the last one which was Shelley's favourite. The destroying powers of Nature have often been compared by Shelley to ghosts.

**For after rain...it again—Expl.** In these closing lines of the poem, Shelley makes the cloud say that as a power of nature she can never be wholly destroyed. She only changes shape as when she is dissolved into rains,—but she can never be wholly extinguished. The cloud says that she cannot die though there are times when she seems to be dead. After the rains and storms are over, the sky regains its deep blue colour ; the winds begin to blow gently, and the sunbeams dance again. There seems to be no cloud in the sky, and the winds and the sunbeams (thinking that the cloud is dead and will not again appear) build up in the sky a beautiful, blue dome in her memory, as the cloud has been dissolved into rains and has been buried in the earth below. At the sight of this, the cloud only laughs to herself for she knows that she will appear in the sky all on a sudden (like a child from the mother's womb, or like a ghost risen from its grave), and destroy the blue dome of air by covering the sky again with dense masses of clouds.

### Questions and Answers

**Q. 1.** How does Shelley regard Nature ? Compare Shelley Wordsworth and Keats as poets of Nature.

**Ans.** See *Introduction* to this poem as well as our Introduction to the poems of Wordsworth in these Selections.

**Q. 2.** Trace the development of thought in Shelley's *The Cloud*.

**Ans.** See *Summary* or *Substance* of the poem.

**Q. 3.** Write short critical estimate of the poem.

**Ans.** See *Criticism*.

Q. 4. Illustrate from the poem Shelley's love of the classics.

Ans. See Notes on St. 1.

Q. 5. Explain the following passages :—

- (a) *From my wings.....sun.* (St. 1)
- (b) *I sift.....blast.* (St. 2)
- \* (c) *Over earth.....remains.* (St. 2)
- \* (d) *The sanguine sunrise.....wings.* (St. 3)
- (e) *And when sunset.....dove.* (St. 3)
- (f) *When I widen.....these.* (St. 3)
- \* (g) *The triumphal arch.....below.* (St. 4)
- (h) *I am the daughler.....die.* (St. 5)
- (i) *For after rain.....again.* (St. 5)

Q. 6. Explain fully the following phrases :—

Thirsting flowers ; Lashing hail ; Sublime on my towers ; Sanguine sunrise ; Meteor eyes ; That orbed maiden ; The beat of her unseen feet etc. ; Wind-built tent ; Burning zone ; Girdle of pearl ; Triumphal arch ; Million-coloured bow ; Sphere-fire ; Moist earth laughs below ; Daughter of the earth and water ; Nursling of the sky ; Convex gleams ; Cenotaph.

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## Robert Browning (1812-1889)

**His Life and works :—***Robert Browning is one of the great English poets*, a contemporary of Tennyson ; as a poet he has been placed by critics by the side of Tennyson, and by many he is regarded as a poet greater than Tennyson, perhaps the greatest in English literature since Shakespeare. He was born in 1812 and he died in 1889. For the most part he was educated at home. His father was a highly cultured man, and encouraged his son's poetical tastes. In 1833 Browning published his first work *Pauline*, a long introspective monologue, which, in spite of its defects, promised future greatness of the poet. In 1835 was produced *Paracelsus*, a very great work which shows lofty thinking and deep insight into human nature on the part of the poet. It shows also high penetrative speculation, and is one of the master-pieces of Browning. In 1841 Browning published a series of poems entitled *Bells and Pomegranates*. This series contains one of Browning's finest and most delicate poems—*Pippa Passes*. It is made up of a number of dramatic scenes woven into unity by, a poor girl, Pippa, who sings to herself as she passes along the town streets from morning to evening, unconsciously calling the main personages to action. After this Browning produced many more poems. In 1842 appeared the *Dramatic Lyrics*, and in 1855 *Men and Women* which may be regarded as containing the very best of Browning's poems. Browning's most notable work, *The Ring and the Book*, was given to the world in 1868-69. Browning died in December, 1889, in his seventy-seventh year.

**His Style—**Robert Browning is the most original English poet of the 19th century. He is original not only in subject-matter, but in style and diction as well ; and this daring originality accounts for the haziness and obscurity of many of his poems, as well as for the fact that of all the Victorian poets Browning is least understood.

There are three Brownings ; Browning, the passionate singer of love and youth and the world of sense ; Browning, the

curious investigator of the devious by-ways of human experience; Browning, the intrepid fighter and valiant believer in the imperishable greatness of the soul of man.

Each has attracted its coterie of admirers—and in his own day at any rate, the last aspect of Browning proved arresting.

*So Browning is a poet with a message, a great poet with a great message* for his own generation and perhaps for all time. While, primarily, a great student and portrayer of human life in its different aspects, he is a mighty teacher with a deep philosophy of life. *Strive, learn, dare—these three words indicate much of Browning's philosophy of life.*

Browning treats of manifold aspects of human life in his verse. His genius is dramatic and versatile in character. His style is often rugged, and his meaning, in many places, obscure; but the poet has a *deep knowledge of human life and a firm belief in the ultimate good purpose of the universe.* Hence arises his *robust optimism.* *He believes that no experience is wasted and that all life is good in its way. There is nothing great or small in God's eyes.* This belief makes Browning look upon the world with broad human sympathy.

His methods are mainly dramatic in essence—many of his poems are dramatic lyrics and in the introspective analysis of human character, no poet has excelled and few have approached him.

## THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

**Date and Occasion :—**The poem was written in 1855, and published in 1868.

Browning and Mrs. Browning paid a visit in the summer of 1847, the year following their marriage, to the Church of St. Augustine at Fano, where they saw the picture, the subject of the poem.

**Central Thought :—***The poem is all about an angel who stands with outstretched wings by a little child. The child is represented as kneeling on a kind of pedestal, while the angel joins its hands in prayer, its gaze being directed towards the sky from which cherubs are looking down.* Browning relates to an absent friend how he saw it in the company of his own "angel"; and

it struck him that he would develop into a poem one of the thoughts suggested by the picture. The thought resolves itself into a yearning for guidance and protection. *The poet fancies himself to be in the place of the child, wishing that the angel would cover his head with his wings, and with his hands press back the excess of thought which has made his brain too big.* Then how thankfully would his eyes rest on his "gracious face", instead of looking to the opening sky beyond; and how beautiful and good the world would seem to him when that healing touch had been upon him!

**Critical Remarks:**—*It is a mere picture which suggests the poem; but what a vivifying touch, the poem itself becomes a living picture!* We seem to see the whole thing, just as if we too were present with Browning where the picture itself stood. The whole conception of the poem could not have been more forcibly brought home to us than by putting the picture before us so vividly and then by slowly drawing out the thought. Browning puts something of his own exuberant life into his words and into the things he describes. His words *picture* things. His strokes always tell; he is always stimulating.

**N.B.**—This poem is suggested by a picture which the poet saw. Another well-known poem suggested by a picture is Cowper's *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture*.

**Metre and Versification:**—The poem is written in stanzas of seven lines each, in *iambic pentameter*, rhyming ababcca. Occasionally there is a Trochee at the beginning of a line, e.g.,—

Pr'essing | the b'rain, | which t'oo | much tho'ught | expa'nds.

Sometimes there is an extra syllable at the end of a line:—

O world, | as God | has made | it! All | is beau | ty:

**N.B.**—The title—"The Guardian Angel" requires a word of explanation. There was, in the Middle Ages, a popular belief that a man was from his birth attended by a particular angel whose duty was to save him from all harm. This belief goes back even to much earlier times, for we hear that Socrates, the father of Greek philosophy, was attended by a *demon* (i.e., an attendant spirit supposed to exercise guardianship over a particular individual). The 'special ministry' of the angel referred to in the poem means this guardianship.

**A Picture at Fano**—It is a picture in the Church of St. Augustine at Fano. Fano lies on the coast of the Adriatic.

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.,

**St. 1. Paraphrase**—O dear and honoured angel, I wish you would only leave that child, when you have done your duty to him, and extend your protecting care to me! I will sit all day here till in the evening you have finished the task that you have undertaken (of protecting the child) and till it is time for your departure; may you then, postponing your departure, find another child (*i.e.*, the poet himself) to be taken care of—another child who requires your services.

**Substance**—The poet prays to the angel who is looking after a child (as in the picture at Fano) that he may also take care of him; he is prepared to wait till evening when the angel's task of protecting the child may be over. The poet requires his services just like the child. He wants to surrender himself as quietly to the keeping of the angel.

**Dear**—Why does the poet address the angel as 'dear'? Well, he claims the affection and care of the angel as he needs them as much as the child who is the ward of the angel. **Great**—The angel is great because of his care and tender affection for a human child. As we have in the sixth stanza, the angel had much to do on earth, though heaven kept its gate invitingly open for him. His services to humanity make him 'great' in the eyes of the poet. **Wouldest thou**—if you would only. **Leave that child**—exchange that child for me (as I need your services as much as the child). **When thou.....him**—When you have finished your task by the child. Notice that the poet has no selfish desire. Let the angel go on doing his duty to the child; but, the poet prays, the angel must extend his protecting care to him also. **For me**—The construction is: leave that child for me. **Let me sit.....here**—I am prepared to wait all day long till you have finished your duty to the child. **Here**—*i.e.*, in the church of St. Augustine at Fano. **Eve**—evening. **Performed**—finished. **Special ministry**—the special task that you have undertaken of protecting the child. **Ministry**—service. **Time.....departure**—when it is time for you to depart. **Suspending**—stopping; postponing. **Thy flight**—your departure to heaven. **Another child**—*i.e.*, the poet himself. **For tending**—

to be taken care of. *To quiet and retrieve*—to be soothed and tranquillised and to be reclaimed. Why does the poet use 'retrieve' in this connection? The poet does not mean that he is falling into any evil courses of life (for 'retrieve' means reclaiming one from the evil courses of life); *he means that he is losing his faith in the goodness and beauty of the world and mankind; the healing touch of the angel will restore to him that faith*; as he says in the fourth stanza:

After thy healing, with such different eyes.

O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:

He needs the help of the angel so that he may have the old vision and belief again, so that he may see the world to be the home of beauty and goodness.

**St. 2. Paraphrase**;—Then (*i.e.*, when you have done with the child) I shall feel that you advance but one step from where you are standing now to the place where I am gazing up to you. And I suddenly find my head covered over with those wings of yours, which now wave over the child, praying on the pedestal of the tomb. I shall feel then that you are protecting me from all the harm of the world, and that even for me you have postponed your flight to heaven, your home, which keeps its doors open for you.

**Substance**:—When the angel has finished his task by the child, the poet will feel that the angel is advancing but one step to look after him; he will feel that the angel is spreading his wings over his head and that the angel is prepared to protect him from all the harm of the world quitting his home in the heavens above.

**Feel**—The poet might have used 'imagined' or 'supposed', but he purposely uses 'feel', conveying the idea of a quiet, personal self-surrender to the keeping of the angel. 'Feel' suggests a more intimate experience, a closer fellowship than 'imagine' or 'suppose'. *Step*—advance. *One step*—only one step and no more. *From where.....gaze*—from the place where you are now to the place where I am looking up to you: The poet wants to give the angel the least trouble; so it is but one step that the angel is to advance that he may also stand with his wings outspread over his (*i.e.*, the poet's) head. *Gaze*—look up to you. *Suddenly*—in a moment and I do not know how and when.

*My head.....over*—I have my head suddenly covered over with your wings. *While.....child*—waving over the child. The angel is represented with white wings or a white loose, flowing garment. *The child who prays*—The child is in the attitude of prayer. *That tomb*—the yonder tomb. 'That' serves the purpose of bringing the tomb particularly to our view. The child is seated on the stone summit of the tomb. *Guarding*—protecting. *Out of all the world*—from all the evil of the world. *For me*—for my sake; in my behalf. *Discarding*—rejecting (the invitation of). *Yon heaven*—heaven that opens above you. *Opens*—opens. *That.....door*—that keeps its gate invitingly open for you.

*Then I shall feel thee.....opens its door*—**Expl.** The poet prays to the angel that he may also extend his protecting care to him, of course after the angel has done with the child who is the special object of his attention. He will at the end of the day, when the angel has no more to look after the child, feel that the angel is advancing but one step forward to come near him; and he will see that his head is suddenly covered over with the angel's wings,—wings which so long rested with a protecting care on the child, seated on the summit of a tomb and praying. The poet will surrender himself thoroughly to the care of the angel and forget everything else; he will feel that the angel is guarding him from all the harm of the world and that he has postponed his flight to heaven for his sake. It is in this spirit of self-surrender that the poet accepts the protection of the angel.

**St. 3. Paraphrase:**—I would not look up, as the child does to the sky opening above, beyond your head; for I know that I look into your pleasing, benign face, O you messenger of God! Will you just bow me down as you do the child; and will you fold my hands together as you do the child's, and raise them up to pray and shelter me in the folds of your garment as you do your charge.

**Substance:**—The poet wishes that the angel may bend over him, and he will not care to look into the opening sky beyond; then the angel will join together his (the poet's) palms in prayer and take him within the folds of his garment.

*Thither*—to the opening sky above.



*Past thy head*—beyond your head. *Because.....opes*—Because the gate of heaven keeps invitingly open. *Like that child*—As the child looks into the opening sky above. *I know*—He means to say that it is no use for him looking into the opening sky above. *Gracious*—pleasing; benign. *Instead*—in the place of the sky. *For I should have.....instead*—I do not wish to look into the sky opening above, for your pleasing, benign face which rests over me is quite enough for me. The poet's spirit of meek self-surrender is the point to be noticed here. *Thou bird of God*—This is an expression taken from Dante's *Purgatorio*—where it is used for the angelic pilot of the boat that bears the souls to the shore, and for the representative of St. Peter who guards the gate of Heaven. *Bend me low*—bow me down. *Like him*—like the child. *Lay*—fold. *Like his*—like the hands of the child. *Lift*—raise. *Tether*—fasten. *As thy lamb there*—The lamb is the child who is in the charge of the angel. The child is compared to a lamb because he is as innocent and meek and has the same spirit of self-surrender as a lamb. *With thy garment's spread*—within the outspread folds of your garment.

*And will thou bend.....spread?*—**Expl.** The poet prays to the angel that the angel may bow down his (the poet's) head as he has done the head of the child and that he may fold together his hands in prayer as he has done the hands of the child, and that the angel too may take him (the poet) within the folds of his garment as he has taken the child. The poet wants to surrender himself entirely to the care of the angel; he will be as meek and gentle as the child and have the same spirit of trust in the angel as the child has.

**St. 4. Paraphrase**—If this prayer of mine were ever granted, I would rest my head beneath yours with a meek trust in your guidance; while your hands with their cool, soothing touch closed my eyes and held my head pressed to your breast, relieving it of the burden of thought which sometimes oppresses it, and composing all wrinkles of care and thought on my forehead till I, all my nerves relaxed and soothed, lay in quiet and blissful repose.

**Substance**—The poet would like to place his head, too much burdened with thought, on the angel's breast while the

angel would pass his hand over it, bringing rest and blissful forgetfulness to it.

*If this.....granted*—If this prayer were ever granted. *Rest*—lay (my head) so that it may rest, so that it may no more be troubled by cares and thoughts. *Beneath thine*—beneath your head. *Healing*—soothing; tranquillising. *Thy healing hands*—your hands relieving me, by mere touch, of anxious thought. *Close covered*—shut them down closely. *Pressing the brain*—contracting by pressure. *Too much thought*—cares and anxieties; anxious speculation. *Expands*—widens; stretches beyond its capacity. *Pressing.....expands*—The idea is that the brain is too big with thought—it is almost bursting with thought, so what is necessary is to hold it fast between the hands (as the poet suggests here) till it returns to its normal shape. *Proper size*—normal shape. Anxious thought and speculation stretch the brain beyond its capacity; a little pressure by the hands of the angel may put it all right. *Smoothing*—composing. *Distortion*—wrinkle. Evidently Browning means the wrinkle on the forehead. *Till every nerve.....soothing*—till all nervous excitement is gone. The idea is that every nerve is irritated and can only be soothed by the soft, gentle touch of the angel's hands. *Quiet*—sunk in profound repose. *Happy*—with a sense of bliss. *Suppressed*—all disquiet of the soul being held down.

*If this was.....suppressed*—**Expl.** If in response to his prayer the angel would agree to be the poet's guardian, then the poet would at once place his head on the angel's bosom and sink into the quiet and peace of that bosom. The poet would like the angel to shut down his (the poet's) eyes, and with his hands to press his (the poet's) brain, too big with thought, till it returns to its normal shape, and to smooth and compose away every wrinkle that care draws on his forehead till every nerve which is on the strain relaxes, till all sense of unrest or uneasiness is totally gone. The poet believes that the soft and gentle touch of the angel's hand will charm down all unrest and disquiet of his (the poet's) mind. His brain which is almost bursting with thought will be much lightened; the wrinkle on his forehead will be wiped off—these results he expects from the soft and gentle touch of the angel's hands.

**St. 5. Paraphrase**—How soon all that seems to be wrong with the world will be mended! I think I should look upon

the world with a different eye, when my brow had been cleared of all wrinkles by the soft, gentle and benign touch of your hands. The world will appear to me as good and beautiful as it was originally made by God. The world is pervaded by beauty; if I know this, then I can love the world; and love and duty are identical—love will necessarily lead one to do his duty. Nothing else is to be learnt or made known to the world.

**Substance**—Once the poet feels the healing touch of the angel, his eyes will be re-opened to the beauty and glory of the world; he will see again nothing but beauty in the world and beauty will naturally call forth the love of his heart and love will teach him to do his duty. It is this great truth that the angel will bring to him.

*How soon*—i.e., when he has known the soft, gentle and benign touch of the angel's hands.

**Worldly wrong**—N. B. The expression does not mean any wrong that the poet has suffered from the world, but all that is wrong with the world. The world, of course, is all right, it is the poet's vision which is in the wrong—the poet has lost his faith that "All is beauty". *The world seems to be gone wrong because of this clouding of his vision and faith.* The angel is to give him back his old vision and faith; *the angel is to re-open his (the poet's) eyes to the beauty and glory of the world.*

*Repaired*—mended.

*How soon.....repaired?*—Expl. Nothing can be wrong with God's world. This faith of the poet was temporarily clouded; so the world appeared to be gone all awry. *The angel's touch will restore to him his old faith and vision; then it will be all right with the world.*

N. B.—We may notice here the cheerful *optimism* of Browning. It is nothing but a triumphant faith in the beneficence of God; it is the faith that good is the final goal of everything. Of all the poets in the sceptical nineteenth century Browning was alone able to keep his faith in the goodness of the world clear and bright and living.

God's in his heaven—

All's right with the world!

—that is his triumphant declaration of faith.

*How*—as the result of the angel's touch. *View*—look upon; behold. *I think.....see*—I think I should look upon the world in a different light (as the result of the angel's soft and gentle touch). *Bared*—(1) left open, (2) free from all wrinkles of care and thought. *When.....bared*—when your hand has been taken off. In the previous stanza we learn that the poet's eyes will be close 'covered' by the angel's hands; so as soon as the hands are withdrawn, (after the healing has been done), the poet will begin to see the world in a different light. So 'bared' gives the idea of the withdrawal of the angel's hands from the forehead and eyes of the poet.

*Healing*—N. B. The poet has already explained what he means by 'healing' in the previous stanza; it will consist in smoothing down all the wrinkles on his brow, in pressing back the tumultuous thoughts struggling in his brain, in soothing all irritated nerves, and finally in bathing the soul in quiet bliss.

*With such different eyes*—in such a different light. The whole expression is to be taken in connection with 'view' in the second line of the stanza. *O world.....it*—He already begins to see the world as God originally made it—all beauty and goodness. We are to suppose that the healing has been partially done. *As God has made it*—God has made the world good and beautiful; we see it to be bad and ugly because of the badness and ugliness within us. All's right with the world—as Browning says. *All is beauty*—The world is pervaded by beauty; nothing that is in the world is ugly. The world is the image of the glory and power of God, it is in this sense that we can say that all is beauty. *This*—the fact that all is beauty. *Knowing.....love*—When we know that the world is pervaded by beauty, that it is the image of God's glory and power, we cannot but love it. *Love is duty*—Love and duty are identical: where there is love, it will prompt us to do our duty. N.B.—It is the whole philosophy of life, put in a nut-shell. The perception that all is beauty, that the world is full of God's power and glory, will teach us to love the world; and when we begin to love the world we cannot but do our duties (for according to Browning love is the chief impulse and inspiration of duty).

*What further.....declared?*—There is nothing else to be learnt or made known to the world; what can be a higher truth than that love is duty? The idea is that man does not

require to know anything else for the guidance of conduct but the truth stated above. *Further*—more than what we already learn from the angel. *Sought for*—i.e., sought to be learnt. *Declared*—announced or made known to the world.

**St. 6. Paraphrase** :—O Alfred, dear friend! Guercino drew this angel, as I understand, to teach the child to pray, lifting up his hands, joined each to each, and the angel's head directed towards the earth, where he had so much work to do, though heaven kept its gate open for him; and the angel was so left at Fano by the sea-shore.

**Substance** :—As Browning understands, the painter draws the angel to teach the child to pray, while the angel postpones his flight to heaven as he has much of work to do on earth.

**Guercino**—Guercino is the nick-name of Barbieri (1590—1666). He is one of the masters of the decadent period of Italian art.

*Drew*—painted. *I saw teach*—supply 'to' before teach. *Guercino.....teach*—The object of Guercino in painting the picture seems to be to teach the child how to pray. *Alfred*—Alfred Domett, who is the subject of the poem "Waring". He went to New Zealand and rose to the Premiership there, returning and resuming his friendship with Browning thirty years later.

*Holding.....up*—lifting up the little hands of the child. *Each to each*—joined each to each. *Pressed gently*—clasped together very tenderly. The word 'gently' expresses the tenderness and affection of the angel for the child. *With his head*—i.e., the head of the angel. *Turned away*—not turned towards heaven which kept its gate invitingly open for the angel, but towards the earth where he had so much work to do. *Where...do*—where so much work waited to be performed by the angel. *Though heaven...him*—The idea is that the angel postponed his flight to heaven so that he might do his work on earth. This love of humanity makes the angel so great ("Dear and great angel"). *He*—i.e., the angel. *By the beach*—by the sea-coast.

**Guercino.....beach—Expl.** As Browning understands it, the purpose of the painter in drawing the portrait of the angel was to teach the child how to pray; and so the angel lifted up the child's little hands and very tenderly clasped them together. But the head of the angel was turned towards the earth where

he had so much of work to do, and not towards heaven which kept its gate open for him; and thus the angel was left at Fano by the sea-coast,—which can only mean that the angel was one who was ready to minister to humanity, even by sacrificing the pleasure of living in heaven; at least that is the meaning put by the poet upon the angel's postponing his flight to heaven, and it is because of this, the poet can expect the angel to look after him.

**St. 7. Paraphrase** :—We visited Fano; we went there three times to sit in the church and have a look at the angel and saturate ourselves with his beauty. My angel (meaning Browning's wife) was with me too. I hold dear the fame of Guercino, to which this picture in execution and workmanship is a testimony, yet I do so not without a sad suggestion of the painter's occasional lapses (for he did not work always with the same steadiness of purpose, or he may have suffered neglect). One particular thought was suggested to me by the picture; and I seized upon it and developed it into a poem. My love (*i.e.*, wife) is with me. Where are you, dear friend of mine? How does the Wairoa flow on in that far extremity of the world where you are now? Here we are at Ancona; there rolls the sea.

**Substance** :—The poet had been thrice to the church of St. Augustine to see the picture, his wife (his guardian angel) with him. The picture is really a great work of the artist, but the poet cannot forget that the artist sometimes worked less earnestly. The picture, however, suggested to him one thought which he has wrought into a poem.

*See him—i.e.*, see the angel. *In his chapel*—in the church of St. Augustine at Fano. *A chapel* usually means a place of worship other than a church, especially, in a palace, mansion or a public institution; but here it is used as identical with a church. *Drink his beauty*—to feed our eyes on the angel's beauty. *To our soul's content*—till our soul has had its fill.

*My angel with me*—my angel being with me; Browning means his wife who is his guardian angel. The poet overlooked for a time that he had already had a guardian angel and might not have sought for a guardian angel elsewhere. *Since I... fame*—as I hold dear to me the fame of the artist Guercino

*In power and glory*—in strength of conception and excellence of workmanship.

*Dower*—gift. *Fraught with*—suggestive of. *Pathos so magnificent*—a sad feeling so sublime. *Pathos*—a quality or element in events or expression that excites emotion, especially pity or sorrow.

*Fraught.....magnificent*—suggesting a deep sad thought (because the artist, i.e., Guercino had not always worked with the same steadiness of purpose or sublimity of conception). *Thus earnestly*—with as much steadiness of purpose as in the present instance, i.e., in the case of the Guardian Angel. *Has else...wrong*—(1) has suffered neglect; (2) has let his devotion to art decline; or has gone through some crisis or some bitter experience of life.

*And since I.....wrong—Expl.* The poet feels for the artist Guercino and will certainly be glad to see him crowned with fame. *This work*—The portrait of the angel is a powerful work—powerful in its conception and execution. It is the best testimony to the genius of the artist; but at the same time the poet cannot forget that the artist did not always work with such seriousness of purpose—a fact that is very sad to think of. That an artist who could produce such a powerful picture should sometimes work carelessly is very regrettable. Or the poet thinks that the artist may have suffered neglect or may have gone through some crisis or bitter experience of life.

*Struck from me*—roused within me. *Spread it out*—developed. *Translating.....song*—working it up into a poem. *My love*—i.e., the poet's wife. *Dear old friend*—Alfred Domett (already referred to in stanza 6) who became Premier (i.e., Prime Minister) of New Zealand. See *ante*. *Wairoa*—a river in the northern island of New Zealand. *At your.....end*—in the extremity of the world where you are. *This is Ancona*—Ancona is to the south of Fano. *Sea*—the Adriatic.

## Questions and Answers

Q. 1. Give the occasion of the poem.

Ans. See Date and Occasion.

*Q. 2. How is the picture at Fano described in the poem ?*

*Ans.* The angel in the picture stands with his wings outspread in a protecting attitude by a little child who is seated on the stone summit of a tomb. Browning does not describe the picture in so many words ; he sketches it in a few vigorous strokes. Not in one stanza, but scattered through all the stanzas of the poem we may find something about the picture itself. In the third stanza, there is something about it :—we are told that heaven opens above and the child in the picture looks up into it ; and again we infer that the angel lifts up the hands of the child to pray, while he holds the child close to him.

*Q. 3. What does the poet want the angel in the picture to do for him and what does he imagine to be the effect of his ministry to him ?*

*Ans.* The angel is looking after a child. The poet wants the angel to look after him (the poet) when the angel has done with the child. He is ready to surrender himself to the keeping of the angel with the simple trust of a child ; he desires the angel to cover his (*i.e.*, the poet's) eyes and press his brain, bursting with thought, to his bosom. The poet will be content to look up into the gracious face of the angel and not to the sky opening above.

If the angel will but do for him all that the poet wants him to do, the poet will forget all the fever and fret of life and sink into the profound peace of the angel's bosom ; and the world will wear a different look to him when his eyes are uncovered—he will again see the world just as it was created by God, full of beauty and glory. The angel thus restores to the poet the faith that all is beauty ; and when the poet knows that all is beauty, he can easily love the world or the creation of God ; and where there is love, it is easy to do one's duty.

*Q. 4. " I took one thought his picture struck from me,  
And spread it out, translating it to song."*

*What is the thought suggested by the picture. How does Browning work it up into a poem ?*

*Ans.* See Q. 3 and *Critical Remarks*.



Q. 5. *Explain the following with reference to the context :—*

- (a) And I shall feel thee.....door. (St. 2)
- (b) And wilt thou bend.....garment's spread ? (St. 3)
- (c) How soon all worldly wrong.....eyes. (St. 5)
- (d) And since I care.....wrong. (Sts. 7 & 8)

Q. 6. *Annotate the following :—*

Special ministry ; retrieve ; out of all the world ; gracious face ; bird of God ; thy lamb ; healing hands ; worldly wrong ; drink his beauty ; dower ; spread it out.

## THE LOST LEADER

**Date and Occasion :—**The poem was published in 1845. *The occasion of the poem was the poet Wordsworth's desertion of the liberal party (i.e., the party of liberty and progress). Wordsworth at first welcomed the French Revolution ; and when the Revolution had progressed in directions not liked by him—he rejected liberal and revolutionary ideas, became a conservative and accepted a pension from the British Government. Browning told Walter Thornbury that Wordsworth was "the lost leader," though "the portrait was purposely disguised a little ; used, in short, as an artist uses a model, retaining certain characteristic traits and discarding the rest."*

**N. B.** The poem need not be tied down to Wordsworth ; it may have partial application to Coleridge, Southey and others who, like Wordsworth, sympathised with the cause of the French Revolution, and who, as the French Revolution did not bring in the promised era of human happiness and progress, became enemies of liberal and popular movements later on.

**Central Thought :—***The poem is a lament over the falling away of a leader from his earlier liberal ideals. "Just for a handful of silver" he left his followers, while they had always looked up to him, made him their "pattern", and borne every kind of sacrifice for his sake. No matter, his followers are prepared to march on to their destined goal without him ; they will not lose their hearts nor will they grow languid in their zeal. They however, hope that their leader will realise his mistake ; and "pardoned in heaven" he will wait for them, "the first by the throne".*

Wordsworth's command of stately, sonorous and dignified diction or style of writing. [It should be remembered, however, that Wordsworth did not always write in such a style, but he occasionally reached it when he forgot his own theory of poetic diction.]

*Caught*—picked up; made our own. *His clear accents*—The reference is again to his style. The directness of his language is meant here. *Pattern*—ideal; model. *Made.....die*—made him our model to be followed in life and death.

*Learned.....die*—N.B. These two lines may be taken to refer to Wordsworth; and we may note here Browning's admiration and respect for Wordsworth.

*Shakespeare.....us*—N.B. One editor remarks:—"The others may pass for democrats or republicans; it is not quite clear in what sense Browning supposes Shakespeare to share their sentiments". It may be true that Shakespeare cannot be labelled as a democrat or republican, one who feels and fights for the rights and liberties of the people. But it does not seem to us that Browning is thinking here so much of Shakespeare's political opinions; he claims Shakespeare to be one of the band of "freemen". Browning might suppose Shakespeare to have a love of truth and principle, to have a strength of conviction, to have a regard for ideals and traditions, the lack of which he laments in the 'lost leader'. *Shakespeare*—Shakespeare (1564—1616) is England's greatest poet and dramatist.

*Milton.....us*—Browning may claim Milton to be one of the liberal party because Milton fought for civil and religious liberty. Milton (1608—1674) is the greatest epic poet of England and is the author of *Paradise Lost*.

*Burns*—Robert Burns (1759—96). A Scottish poet; with little of schooling he struggled his way to a fair knowledge of the English language and literature, and began to write poems, sometimes in English and sometimes in his Scotch dialect; and they were very remarkable poems sometimes. His well-known poems are *The Jolly Beggars*, *Hallow'en*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *The Mouse*, *The Mountain Daisy*, etc. *Burns* was intensely democratic; himself a peasant, he painted in his poems the pathos, so intensely real, of peasant-life with all its little joys and sorrows, poverty and squalor; for aristocracy he

had nothing but supreme contempt. Burns is the greatest lyric poet of Scotland. *Shelley*—See *ante*. Shelley dreamed of reforming and regenerating mankind by and through love and liberty.

*Were with us*—had the same hopes and aspirations as ourselves; served the same cause of the people as we. *They watch.....graves*—Though they are dead, yet they are still interested in our activities and so they are observing all that we are doing. *Breaks*—falls off from. *Van*—advance-guard. *Freemen*—men who will not surrender their freedom of opinion or personal conviction, or will not barter away their principle or ideal for money.

*Sinks to the rear*—falls back among those who are coming behind. *Rear*—the hindmost division of military force. *He alone.....slaves*—The idea here is that of the march of a troop, in the fore-front there being 'freemen' and in the rear there being 'slaves'. Wordsworth had been so long the leader of the troop; now he falls off and goes to join the slaves in the rear. *N. B.*—The change in Wordsworth's mentality is well indicated in these lines. He at first sympathised with all that the French Revolution stood for; but when the French Revolution failed to bring the promised era of peace and happiness for mankind, Wordsworth turned away from it in disgust, and henceforth gave no credit to any popular struggle for freedom and independence. He failed to see the distinction between the *means* and the *end*; the French Revolution might be a wrong means but the end, *viz.*, the winning of popular freedom was a noble one. Now because the French Revolution was not the right way of winning popular freedom it does not follow that all movements for popular freedom were wrong.

*Slaves*—(1) those who do not care for their liberty and are prepared to barter away their principle or ideal for money; (2) those who are reactionary in their views, *i.e.*, those who will keep the old order of things unchanged, those who are not in favour of giving greater liberty to the people or ameliorating the condition of the poor.

**St. 2. Paraphrase:**—We shall march on to our goal in glory, though he ('the lost leader') may not be with us to inspire us; songs may encourage us on our way, but no song of his. We

shall perform deeds of glory, but he will have no share in them, for he will bid those stand whom we urge to go forward. Let his name be wiped off; take note that one more soul is gone to its doom, that one more noble task is shirked, one more pathway of honour is avoided. Oh, it is one more victory for the devils, and one more cause of regret for the angels; it is one more wrong done to man, and one more insult to God. The shadows of night are descending on us; we do not want him any more. If he comes back again, we cannot receive him with the old cordiality and there will always be suspicion, mistrust and regret in our minds and we shall not be able to praise him sincerely. There can never be the open daylight of cordiality, but there will always be the cloud of doubt and suspicion. Let us fight on to our goal, for we taught him how to fight the battles of life; strike your blows bravely; let us first possess our own hearts before we conquer his own. Then he will learn that he has made a mistake; he will, however, be pardoned by God in heaven, and wait for us, on the right hand side of God.

**Substance :—**The loss of the leader will not mean much to the party. The party of liberty and progress fighting for the people will march on to its goal without him: it may not be again inspired by his words and deeds. His falling away from his early noble ideals is more a loss to himself, for he suffers in it a moral degradation. If he comes back now, his disciples and admirers cannot receive him with the old cordiality. The poet, however, hopes that he ('the lost leader') will soon learn his mistake, and pardoned in heaven he will wait for the party he led, 'first by the throne' of God.

*Shall march*—The idea of the march of the troop is continued here. *Prospering*—winning daily new glory. *Not thro' his presence*—not inspired by his presence with us. He will not be with us to inspire us with his presence. *Inspire!*—fill us with new courage. *Lyre*—a stringed musical instrument. *Lyre stands here for the gift of poetry*, as sometimes poetry is spoken of in terms of music. Poetry and music are often taken as identical—a tradition which has come down from the time of the Greeks (for in Greek mythology Apollo is the god both of music and poetry).

*Songs*.....*lyre*—**Expl.** We may no longer be inspired by his songs (poetry), for not he, but somebody else will sing to us now. The poet is thinking of the marching-song here; not Wordsworth, but somebody else will sing the marching-song to cheer the soldiers of liberty.

*Deeds*—deeds of glory. *Quiescence*—inactivity; an inglorious life of retirement. *While*.....*quiescence*—while he is proud to retire to an inglorious life of inactivity. *Crouch*—bow low; stoop down. *Whom*—those whom. *The rest*—(1) the rest of mankind; (2) the progressive party which Browning represents. *Aspire*—look up, and not stoop down; pitch their aims and projects high; hold up their ideal.

*Deeds*.....*aspire*—**Expl.** The progressive party which Browning represents will march on to its goal without its leader who has fallen away from his early noble ideal. The words and deeds of the 'lost leader' will no more inspire it. Many glorious deeds will be performed, but he will have no share in them. He will be proud to sink into inaction; he will bid men follow a humdrum existence in the world without having higher hopes and aspirations; he will be now for a sober course of life—no enthusiasm, no running away with an ideal, no effort to right the wrongs of mankind.

*Blot out*—wipe off. *Record*—keep note of. *One lost soul more*—one more soul fallen away from its ideal. *One task*—one noble deed. *Declined*—shirked. *One more foot-path*—one more pathway of honour; one more honourable course of action. *Untrod*—untraversed. *One more triumph*—The falling away of a human soul from its ideal is a gain for the devil. [The Christian conception is that Satan is out in the world to capture human souls and the more he can draw away human souls from God, the greater is his delight.] *The devils*—the powers of evil. *Sorrow*—matter of regret. *Angels*—The angels are the friends and benefactors of mankind; hence the misery and degradation of a human soul is a matter of regret to them. *One*.....*man*—'The lapse or degradation of a human soul' means one more loss to the cause of humanity. *One*.....*God*—The falling away of a soul from God is an insult to Him.

*Blot out*.....*God*—**Expl.** As the leader has left his party for a handful of silver, let his name be blotted out.

He is one more lost soul—a soul that is fallen away from God. One more endeavour in the cause of humanity is shirked, one more course of honourable action is abandoned. The falling away of a soul gives delight to the devils and pain to angels; it means one more loss to the cause of humanity and a disrespect to God. The leader barter away his soul for a handful of silver; his is a lost soul. Therefore, it delights devils and pains angels; it means also that humanity loses the services of that soul, and God its loyalty.

*Life's night*—The idea is that they have so long marched on in daylight, but now night approaches. 'Life's night' may, therefore, stand for hard, critical times. The desertion of their leader means a sad time for them. *Let.....us*—We do not want him; we can do without him. *Doubt*—mistrust; suspicion. *Hesitation*—embarrassment, or rather a stiffness, constraint in our relations with him; no free, cordial relation. *Pain*—regret. *Forced praise*—no sincere praise, but only a lip-praise (a merely formal thing with no sincerity of feeling). *There.....part*—They cannot receive him with their old sincerity and cordiality; if he comes back again to them and their party of liberty and progress, they will receive him with suspicion and mistrust and they can but praise him reluctantly. *The glimmer of twilight*—The shadow of suspicion and doubt will hang on their relations. *Glimmer*—a faint light. *Twilight*—the diffused light from the sky appearing before sunrise and after sunset. *Never.....again*—We cannot have between us any free, unconstrained, hearty relation again. 'Glimmer' stands for doubt and suspicion; 'morning' stands for a free, sincere, cordial relation.

*Glad confident morning*—morning which fills the heart with gladness and confidence; here a free, sincere, cordial relation.

*Fight on well*—struggle on with courage; do not worry about the loss of the leader. *For we taught him—i.e.*, we taught him to fight well. Just as the party owed much to the leader, the leader also owed something to the party. *Gallantly*—bravely. *Master our heart*—Let us subdue and conquer our hearts first. Another reading is:—*Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own*. The idea is this:—there is much that is evil in our hearts; let us shed it away first, let us purify our hearts; let us reform ourselves first. *Master*—subdue or conquer. *His own*—the

lost leader's heart. **N.B.**—The poet does not altogether give up the leader for lost; he might yet be reclaimed. If his disciples and followers will be steady in the pursuit of their ideal, if they will shed away all that is evil in their hearts, if they can demonstrate to the world by their constancy and perseverance in the cause of truth that they are in the right, and that their leader is in the wrong, then they can reclaim their leader.

*Then*—in the event of their following their purpose steadfastly or sincerely serving the cause of truth. *The new knowledge*—the knowledge that we are in the right, and he is in the wrong. Browning means to say that one day he (the lost leader) will learn his mistake. *Wait us*—await us (in heaven). *Pardoned in heaven*—The poet expects that God will pardon the lost leader (and there is the chance of his rejoining his party in Heaven). *The first by the throne*—i. e., one who will stand first by the throne of God. Notice here Browning's veneration for Wordsworth (if he refers to Wordsworth by the "lost leader").

*Master our heart.....throne.*—**Expl.** The poet does not give up the hope of reclaiming the lost leader. His idea is this:—let us reform ourselves from within, let there be nothing that is evil in our hearts; then we shall be able to conquer his heart easily. He ('the lost leader') will learn his mistake and he will then wait for us in heaven, God having pardoned his lapse and placed him on his right-hand side. To reclaim their lost leader, all that his followers will have to do is to purify their hearts, to be steadfast in the pursuit of their ideal, to be always up and doing; for then they will be able to show to their leader that he has been in the wrong, and they have been always in the right.

### Questions and Answers

Q. 1. Write a critical note on the poem "The Lost Leader."

Ans. See Critical Remarks.

**Q. 2.** *Whom did Browning particularly think of in writing the poem, or with whom do you identify the 'Lost Leader'?*

**Ans.** See *Date and Occasion* and *Notes*.

*Browning had particularly Wordsworth in mind in writing the poem.* He does not, however, mean that all the details in the poem should be connected with Wordsworth. He disguises the portrait a little, just as an artist uses his model, retaining certain characteristic traits and discarding the rest. Browning does not, for example, wish that we should apply the lines

Just for a handful of silver he left us,

Just for a riband to stick in his coat;—

to Wordsworth. Of course, at the time of writing the poem, his mind was filled with the thought of Wordsworth's lamentable change in mentality, for the poem itself has references to it again and again. Browning must have been very much grieved by this change; the poem, therefore, no matter whether we think of Wordsworth or of no particular person, is a transcript of his genuine feeling.

**Q. 3.** *Quote lines from the poem, showing Browning's respect and admiration for Wordsworth.*

**Ans.** "We that had loved him so.....

.....

"Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne!"

**Q. 4.** *Reproduce the main features of Browning's portrait of the "Lost Leader."*

**Ans.** See *Substance*.

The leader left his followers just for a handful of silver, just for a paltry official honour, and for these he lost the genuine love and respect and devotion of his followers. He was the leader of the band of freemen; now he goes to join the slaves in the rear. His followers will march on to their destined goal without him; they will no longer be inspired by his words and deeds. They will perform deeds of glory, but he will have no share in them. His desertion means a great triumph for the devils and sorrow for the angels. Once they lived in his mild



and magnificent eye; now he hardly thrills their hearts. If he were to come back, they could not receive him with their old sincerity and cordiality. They, however, hope that he will learn his mistake, and wait for them, "pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne".

Q. 5. *Explain the following with reference to the context :—*

- (a) Rags—were they.....proud. (St. 1)
- (b) He alone breaks.....slaves. (St. 1)
- (c) Deeds will be done.....aspire. (St. 2)
- (d) Menace our heart.....throne. (St. 2)

*Ans. See Notes.*

Q. 6. *Annotate the following :—*

Handful of silver; with the gold to give; purple; mild and magnificent eye; inspirit; quiescence; crouch; life's night; forced praise; glimmer of twilight; new knowledge; the first by the throne.

*Ans. See Notes.*

### Supplementary Note.

N. B.—See line 30 :—*Master.....own*—Another reading is, *Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own*—which would mean, first aim at destroying the passions of our heart, then try to hurt him. "Menace" is the reading in the Oxford edition—and also in the new edition of the University text.

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## J. R. Lowell (1819-91)

**His life.**—James Russell Lowell was born at Cambridge, New England, on February 23, 1819. Delicate as a child, his early years were carefully tended by an elder sister. By reading to him extracts from the poetry of Shakespeare and Spenser in his boyhood, she infused into him a love of poetry. He was educated first at William Well's famous school at Boston, whence he went to Harvard in 1834. Though at that time English literature had not there the same importance as now, there was great enthusiasm, among the students, for the poetry of Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. Lowell showed remarkable power in his verses to the College Magazine and was elected as class poet in 1837. His career at College was uneventful except that he was once rusticated for his repeated neglect to observe the hard and fast rule of attendance at morning chapel. However, he graduated in 1838, and then studied for the bar but as poetry seemed to have attracted him more, he gave up his legal studies. In 1853, he married Maria White, a beautiful and delicate girl of simple and refined tastes. In the meantime, Lowell earned a great reputation by his lectures on English poetry at Boston. In 1851, he took his wife to Italy for her delicate health, but it proving ineffectual, they returned to America where she died shortly afterwards. A second marriage followed in 1857. From 1857—1861, Lowell was editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. In 1863, he became joint editor of the *North American Review*; and many papers contributed to it were afterwards collected in *Among My Books* (1870) and *My Study Windows* (1871). For nearly thirty years he was Smith Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard, having succeeded Longfellow in 1854. In 1872 he went abroad again after resigning his Chair. On his return he took part in the politics of the day, and in 1877 he was appointed official representative at the Court of Madrid, and from 1880 to 1885 he filled the same office in England. His second wife died just before his return to America, where he settled at his beautiful home Elmwood. His health began to give way; he had a serious illness from which he rallied for a time only. He died in 1891.

**Literary Estimate.**—"Lowell is essentially American as a poet, and cosmopolitan as a prose-writer. For this reason his verse is less appreciated across the water than is his prose, and in popularity he is certainly less appealing than Longfellow, Poe, Whitman or even Holmes. There is, of course, a respectable body of his verse not concerned with patriotic motives and local inspiration; but this, with one or two rare exceptions, is the least distinguished point about it while as a poet his reputation rests chiefly on his inimitable *Biglow Papers*. His most considerable productions in verse are American in their inspiration—to wit, the wise and witty *Fable for Critics*—on American poets and poetry; the stirring *Commemorative Ode*, and other memorial poems, especially the *Ode Under The Old Elm*—celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of Washington's command of the Revolutionary Army. A passionate love of country animates Lowell's best verse. When the matters with which he deals are of more universal interest—he is less fresh, less original but his poetry is always virile and intelligent and his latter work always finished and impressive in its art.

## TO THE DANDELION

**Central Thought:**—*The dandelion is a common flower which grows by the wayside, and which people may pass by without noticing. The flower is peculiarly dear to the poet because of its associations with the early days of his childhood. It reminds him now of the robin's song which brought to him in childhood a message from heaven above. The poet recognises in it the type of those humble acts of gentleness and love, which make life good and noble, those cheap delights which the wise can glean out of the dust and strife of earthly life, viz., the words of sincere gladness, the looks of friendly affection, any tokens of love which nourish the human heart in its lonely isolation. The flower teaches the poet to recognise in every human heart "its scanty gleam of heaven."*

**Critical Remarks:**—*The poet moralises on a common flower in which other people may see nothing. This seeking a lesson from a flower means that the poet is seeking an ideal refuge from the fever and fret of life in the modern world. The flower may teach the human heart to behold "some glimpse of God where all before was cold"; there we read the poet's yearning, his struggle with*

the meanness and ugliness of life in the world, so that the "glimpse of God" may not be obscured in his heart. The flower revives his faith in man and God. The poem is after all commonplace; there is nothing of deep insight in it, nothing of the surprise of exquisite phrasing.

**Metre and Versification** :—The poem is written in stanzas of irregular lines, rhyming *ababaccdd*. The rhythm is *regular iambic*, with an occasional Trochee put in the first foot generally. Take an instance :—

Fr'inging | the dust | y road | with harm | less gold.

The first foot here is a trochee; it may be again noted that except the 'third and the seventh lines, all the lines consist of five feet (Iambic Pentameter). There are instances of faulty rhymes :—e.g., in the second stanza, 'seas' rhymes with 'ease'; in the third stanza 'thee' rhymes with 'tree'

### Analysis

(1) The dandelion—the first pledge of gladsome May, a flower dearer to the poet than any other flowers. (St. 1)

(2) The flower—a free gift of Spring to rich and poor alike, neglected by many who do not know how to take it at God's value. (St. 2)

(3) Its associations with the early days of the poet's childhood. (St. 3)

(4) The flower—a type of all the humble exercises of love and gentleness which make life worth living, of the innocent pleasures of the wise, extracted out of the strife and activities of life, of words of sincere gladness, looks of friendly affection, and expressions of love. (St. 4)

(5) *The lesson that the poet draws from the flower—every human heart reflects in joy its scanty gleam of heaven, which we could catch if we but loved.* (St. 5)

**Moral**—The moral of the poem is found in the following lines :—

"Thou teachest me to deem  
More sacredly of every human heart,  
Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam  
Of heaven..... .."

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

*Dandelion*:—A well-known flower of the order *Compositae*, with one large, bright yellow flower.

**St. 1. Paraphrase**:—O dear dandelion that we meet everywhere, you grow by the wayside and scatter your gold in the dust of the road; you are the herald of gladsome May. Children pluck you and pridefully hold you in their hands, exulting plunderers as they are, rejoicing that they have discovered a hoard of wealth in the grass, which the whole region of the earth has nothing to compare with in beauty and grandeur. You are dearer to me than all the summer flowers, however magnificent they may be.

**Substance**:—The dandelion may be a common flower, scattering its gold in the dust of the road; yet children will fall upon it like exulting plunderers as if they have discovered a land of gold there. Nothing on earth can compare with it in beauty and grandeur. The poet is fonder of it than any other summer flowers.

*Common flower*—a flower that is to be met with everywhere. Why is it 'dear'? The poet has a particular reason to be fond of it. (See below). *Beside the way*—by the wayside. *Fringing*—bordering. *Dusty road*—a road full of dust. *Harmless gold*—The reference is to the bright-yellow petals of the flower as 'harmless gold'; 'harmless' implies that it is gold which excites no covetousness among men, nor sets them quarrelling with one another. *Pledge*—token; evidence. *Blithesome*—gladsome; sprightly. *Full of pride*—pridefully. *Uphold*—hold up in their hands. Children are proud to have the golden flower in their hands. *High-hearted*—exultant; full of pride; rejoicing. *Buccaneers*—piratical adventurers of the seventeenth century (usual meaning); here plunderers, ravagers, (referring to the children who are seizing the dandelion flower). *O'erjoyed*—rejoicing.

*Eldorado*—A name given by the Spaniards to undiscovered 'land of gold' in South America; many expedition searched vainly for it from 1531 to 1595. Raleigh was liberated by the avaricious James I in order to find 'the city of Manoa in Eldorado.' The term is now used metaphorically for land where

plenty of gold can be had. *That they.....found*—that they have discovered a hoard of wealth in the grass ; the flowers in their blaze of colour are a treasure to them.

*Rich*—abounding in beautiful things. *Ample*—spacious ; immense ; vast. *Round*—sphere. *Match*—find an equal to ; parallel. *Which.....wealth*—which the spacious earth has nothing to compare with in beauty and magnificence. *Prouder*—more magnificent ; hence the reason to be proud. *Summer-blooms*—flowers of the summer.

**St. 2. Paraphrase** :—Your gold did not attract the Spanish ships all the way through the serenity and dead calmness of the seas of the West Indies, which speak of primitive days ; nor did the aged, with their brows knitted with cares and anxieties, ever take pains to despoil a pansy (another interpretation : nor did your gold wrinkle the brow of the aged father to rob the love of his heart of ease). It (the dandelion flower) is the gift of Spring which she bountifully distributes to the rich and poor, though many do not know how to accept the gift as a godsend, but pass by it, freely offered as it is, and deny their eyes the pleasure of seeing it.

**Substance** :—Gold (*i.e.*, the gold colour) such as the dandelion flower possesses never tempted the Spanish ships out into the Indian seas (to sail to America on plundering expeditions) ; nor did an old man, with his brow darkening with cares and anxieties ever seek to rob a pansy (another interpretation : nor did the gold of the dandelion flower wrinkle the brow of an old man and made him refuse his daughter's hand to a poor lover ; gold of another sort did this wicked work). The poet means that gold leads men to do various evil deeds—but not the gold of the dandelion flower, *i.e.*, not the golden dandelion flower. This flower is a free gift to the rich and poor alike, but they do not know how to take it in the right spirit.

*Gold such as thine*—The dandelion's blaze of yellow colour is its gold. *Drew*—attracted. *Prow*—the fore part of a ship ; here ship. The figure is *Synecdoche* (part for the whole). *Primeval*—characteristic of primitive days. *Primeval hush*—silence, unbroken, and undisturbed, as prevailed in the primitive age. *Indian Seas*—The seas of the West Indies are meant here. *Primeval hush of Indian Seas*—the dead calmness of the seas in the West Indies, which speaks of primitive days. *Winkled*—

It is a misprint for 'wrinkled'; became marked with lines of care.

*Gold such as thine.....Spanish prow*—N. B. This line explains 'harmless gold' in line 2, Stanza 1. The Eldorado tempted the Spanish ships to go out into the becalmed seas of the West Indies in search of gold; but the harmless gold of the dandelion never sets men seeking after it.

*Primeval.....seas*—'Primeval' suggests a quiet, tranquil region (of the ocean) which was the feature of a primitive age. These seas were not navigated before the Spaniards sailed through them to America in search of gold. The idea is that if these seas had been frequently navigated, then they could not have 'primeval hush'. *Hush*—silence; a becalmed state.

*Lean*—worn; faded. *Brow*—forehead. *Age*—i.e., old men. *Rob*—despoil the beauty of. *The lover's heart of ease*—(1) The flower pansy is meant here; the pansy is known also as *Heart's ease*, and *Love-in-idleness*. N. B.—If the pansy is meant here, the combination 'heart of ease' seems to be rather unusual; why again is it 'lover's heart of ease'? The pansy has an association with love. Compare—

Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell;  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound  
And maidens call it *love-in-idleness*.

—Shakespeare, *M. N. D.*, II. 1, 165—168.

Hence, it means "the *heart's ease* which is the special flower of the lover."

(2) Another interpretation: the peace of mind of the lover.

*To rob.....ease*—(i) There is an element of confusion in the line; and it is due to the poet's combining the two associations of the flower into one—(1) the association of the flower with love, and (2) its association with the ease of heart.

(ii) Another interpretation: to rob the lover of his peace of mind.

*Gold such as thine.....heart of ease*—Expl. The Spanish people fitted out ships to go on plundering expeditions to seek gold in America; and these ships had to sail through the calm, tranquil seas of the West Indies; but people never

bother themselves about the gold which is possessed by the dandelion. The dandelion's blaze of colour is its gold, but it does not excite the covetousness of men. Nor did the aged ever take so much pains to gather pansies as they take in gathering gold in the course of which their brows are furrowed with lines of care. [Another interpretation : nor did the gold of the dandelion wrinkle the brow of an old man and make him refuse the hand of his daughter to a poor lover, thus depriving the lover of his peace of mind.] Gold made the Spaniards go on plundering expeditions to America, sailing through the seas of the West Indies ; it makes old men deprive poor lovers of their peace of mind. But the gold of the dandelion (*i.e.*, the golden dandelion flowers) never did such evil things, it is 'harmless gold'.

*Largess*—gift. *Scatters*—freely distributes. *To rich and poor alike*—to give delight both to the rich and the poor. *With lavish hand*—bountifully. *Hearts*—human hearts. *Take*—accept. *At God's value*—in the spirit or sense in which God means it to be taken ; at the price which God sets upon it. **N.B.**—The flower is a thing of beauty ; and a thing of beauty is a joy for ever ; God means the flower to give us pleasure ; if we demand something else from the flower, then we do not take it at God's value. *Pass by the offered wealth*—ignore the gift so freely offered by God for our enjoyment. *The wealth*—the flower dandelion which is wealth in itself. *Unrewarded eye*—the eye which is denied the pleasure of enjoying the beauty of the dandelion.

*'Tis the Spring's largess.....unrewarded eye*—**Expl.** The dandelion is a free gift of the Spring, which may be enjoyed by the rich and the poor alike, but it is a pity that men do not know how to accept a gift like that—at any rate they do not know how to draw their fill of pleasure from it. Men may find much in the dandelion to delight their hearts ; but they ignore it and so go without the pleasure on which they might feed their eyes.

**St. 3. Paraphrase :—**The earliest memories of my childhood are associated with you. When I see you, I am reminded of the robin's song. The bird sang from an old tree all day long, and I, innocent and full of reverence in my days of



childhood, listened as to the song of an angel, the song bringing to me, pure and unsoiled as I was, every day fresh news from heaven, when birds and flowers and I were happy companions.

**Substance** :—The dandelion reminds the poet of the robin's song. And what did not the song mean to him in his days of childhood? It brought to him every day fresh news from heaven. It was like the song of an angel, and the poet heard it enraptured. He was then a companion of flowers and birds.

*My childhood's.....thoughts*—the earliest recollections of my childhood. *Linked*—associated; combined. *The sight of thee—i.e.*, the sight of the dandelion. *Calls back*—recalls; brings back to my mind. *Robin*—the bird known as the Robin-redbreast; 'the pious bird with the scarlet breast, our little English Robin' as Wordsworth says. *Who*—The antecedent of 'who' is 'robin' and not 'song'. *The dark old tree*—It must be some tree familiar to the poet. 'Dark' may mean 'dark with heavy branches and thick foliage', and thus it has something mystic and romantic about it for the little child. *Beside the door*—another local detail mentioned here; evidently the door of the poet's house. *Clearly*—distinctly. *Secure*—(1) safe (in the ordinary sense); not likely to be led astray; (2) free from cares in the Latin sense. *Childish piety*—innocence and the spirit of reverence characterising him in his days of childhood. *As if I heard an angel sing*—The robin's song seemed to him like the song of an angel. *News*—messages. *Listened.....Heaven*—The poet heard enraptured the robin's song which seemed to tell him of things of heaven above. *Fresh*—something new every day. The news of heaven that the song of the robin brought to him every day was fresh and new. Supply 'to' after 'every day', which will make the sense clear; there is 'to' in the original text of the author—without 'to' the whole rhythm of the line is destroyed. *Untainted*—pure and unsoiled. *Peers*—comrades. *When birds.....peers*—The poet means to say that in his days of childhood he was a companion of flowers and birds and implies that this companionship has now been broken up with the growth of age.

[N.B.—Two more stanzas of the original poem have been omitted here. In these two stanzas the poet gets into extrava-

gant raptures over the flower. The poem has suffered little by the omission of these two stanzas.]

**St. 4. Paraphrase:**—You are the emblem of those acts of love and gentleness which make life good and noble, of those easily-obtained pleasures that the wise only know how to draw out of the humdrum activities and struggles of earthly life,—such pleasures consisting of words of sincere gladness, and looks of friendly affection,—any expression of love, which might yet sustain the hearts of some hungering for human love and sympathy, and teach them to see some image, however faint, of God where they at first saw only blank nothing.

**Substance:**—The poet beholds in the dandelion an emblem of all that will make human life good and noble, the pleasures which the wise can extract out of the common activities and struggles of life, *viz.*, sincere words and friendly looks and tokens of love, which may nourish some hearts languishing in lonely neglect.

**Type**—emblem. **Charities**—exercises of love and gentleness. **Meek**—humble. **Make up**—constitute. **Which.....life**—which contribute to a large extent to the ennoblement of life. **Cheap delights**—pleasures which can be easily obtained; pleasures which cost little or nothing. **Pluck**—draw; secure. **Dusty wayside**—The poet means that the wise have not to go out of their ways to find these pleasures;—they find them in the common affairs of life. **Dusty wayside of earth's strife**—the competition and struggle connected with the common concerns of life. 'Dusty', because the idea is that one gets soiled with dust in this struggle. 'Earth's strife' implies that the earth itself is the scene of strife or struggle (*dust* and *heat* are associated with strife). The wise know how to extract pleasures out of the common activities and struggle of life. **Frank cheer**—'Cheer' may be taken here in the sense of (1) a face or countenance, or it may be taken in the sense of (2) gladness. **Glances**—looks. **Love's smallest coin**—the slightest token of love. 'Words of frank cheer', 'glances of friendly eyes'—the dandelion which is a common flower 'fringing the dusty road' is the type of those common delights ('cheap delights') which the wise derive from the dusty struggle of everyday life. **Morsel**—fragment. **Keep alive**—sustain; nourish. **Starving heart**—a heart languishing

for want of human love and sympathy. *Behold*—see. *Glimpse*—image or reflection. *Cold*—feelingless and unsympathetic. *Where.....cold*—where there was a blank nothing. *Some glimpse.....cold*—Notice that it is in the human heart that the glimpse of God is revealed; when the human heart exhibits love and sympathy, there we have image or glimpse of God. It is a thought to which the poet returns again and again.

*Love's smallest coin.....cold*.—**Expl.** The poet sees in the dandelion the emblem of all that makes life good and noble, of the easily-obtained pleasures which the wise only know how to get out of the concerns and struggle of life, such pleasures consisting of words of sincerity, friendly looks, and the slightest token of love. These things might sustain a heart which was hungering for human love and sympathy, and might teach it to see in these acts of love and gentleness the image of God which was for a time obscured by the selfishness and meanness prevailing around

**St. 5. Paraphrase:**—Nature seems to be a spendthrift, when you, in spite of the golden blaze of your colour, are so common a flower. You teach me to think of the human heart as the sacred temple of God, because in its joy the human heart reveals the image, however faint, of God, and might reveal to us some wonderful secret, if we approached it with love, and if we had the faith and simplicity of a child to read the human heart and God's message therein.

**Substance:**—Nature must be very reckless of her wealth when she has made the dandelion with all its golden blaze of colour a common flower. The flower, however, teaches the poet to think of the human heart as the very dwelling-place of God, and to believe that each human heart reflects in its joy the image of God, and man may learn something more if he will but approach it with love and the simple faith of a child.

*Prodigal*—one who spends lavishly and recklessly; a spendthrift. Nature is a prodigal because she can afford to make the dandelion, a beautiful and magnificent golden flower, a very common one. *For all thy gold*—in spite of the golden blaze of your colour. *Common*—to be met with everywhere. *Deem*—think. *More sacredly*—i.e., as the temple of God. *Every human heart*—The common dandelion flower teaches us to value 'more

sacredly' the common human heart ('every human heart'). *Each*—i.e., each human heart. *Reflects*—reveals. *Scantly*—meagre. *Gleam*—a beam or ray; image or reflection. *Its scanty gleam of Heaven*—the faint image of God. *Could some wondrous show*—could reveal to us some wonderful mystery. What is this 'secret' referred to? The poet might think of the ready response of the human heart to love and sympathy—a response which may be due to the spirit of God dwelling in it; or he might think of something else in connection with the will and purpose of God.

*But*—only *Owe*—owe to God, or Man, or both. *Pay the love we owe*—offer the love which is due from us to our fellow-beings. *Undoubting*—unquestioning; simple and easy of belief. *Undoubting wisdom*—There is wisdom in simple and unquestioning faith; wisdom more often consisting in a frank acceptance of a thing than in a sceptical spirit which rejects everything, whether right or wrong. *Living pages of God's book*—i.e., human hearts in which we can read the purposes of God as in the pages of a book. The idea is that we have the image of God in the human heart, that we can read in it the will and purpose of God. The word 'living' implies the interplay of passions and feelings in the human heart.

*Thou' teachest*.....*God's book*—**Expl.** This is the lesson which the poet receives from the dandelion, a flower that inspite of all its blaze of colour is very common. The poet now thinks of the human heart as a sacred temple of God; and he believes that each human heart reveals in its joy the image, however faint, of God and that it could teach man some wonderful mystery if he would but approach it with love and the simple, unquestioning faith of a child. Human hearts are the 'living pages of God's book'; we can read therein the will and purpose of God.

### Questions and Answers

Q. 1. *Why is the dandelion particularly dear to the poet?*

Ans. See *Central Thought*.

*Hints* :—The flower dandelion is so dear to the poet because it is associated with the recollections of his childhood. It

reminds him of those days when he was pure and innocent, when he heard enraptured the robin's song, bringing to him every day fresh news from heaven, when he was a companion of birds and flowers.

Secondly, the flower is an emblem of those common acts of love and gentleness which make life good and noble, of those cheap delights which the wise only know how to extract out of the common concerns and struggles of life, these cheap delights consisting of words of sincerity, of looks of friendly affection, of love, however small in measure, which might sustain a heart in lonely isolation.

Q. 2. *What lesson does the poet draw from the dandelion?*

Ans. See Substance (Stanzas 4 and 5).

Q. 3. *Explain the following with reference to the context :—*

- (a) High-hearted buccaneers.....wealth. (Stanza 1)
- (b) 'Tis the Spring's largess.....eye. (Stanza 2)
- (c) Thou art the type.....cold. (Stanza 4)
- (d) Thou teachest me to deem...God's book. (Stanza 5)

Ans. See Notes.

Q. 4. *Annotate the following :—*

Harmless gold ; first pledge ; high-hearted buccaneers ; Eldorado ; ample round ; primeval hush ; lover's heart of ease ; Spring's largess ; at God's value ; childish piety ; untainted ears ; meek charities ; dusty wayside of earth's strife ; love's smallest coin ; starving heart ; scanty gleam ; living pages of God's book.

Ans. See Notes.

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# Oliver Goldsmith (1728--1774)

## THE VILLAGE PREACHER

(From THE DESERTED VILLAGE)

**Life of the poet**—Oliver Goldsmith was born at Pallas, Ireland, on Nov. 29, 1728. He was the son of a clergyman whose portrait as drawn in the *Deserted Village* by his son, is well-known to everybody. Goldsmith was sent to some local school, and in time to Trinity College, Dublin, "but he does not seem to have cut a very good figure as a pupil and scholar." In 1760 his fame as a literary man was established by his *Citizen of the World*. *The Traveller* was published in 1764, *The Vicar of Wakefield* in 1766, and *The Deserted Village* in 1770. He was now recognised as one of the literary leaders of the time and became a prominent member of the Johnsonian circle. In the height of his glory he died on March 25, 1774. *He was a charming man and a friend of the poor.* There were times when he gave his last farthing to the poor beggars who came to seek his help. *As a writer of prose Goldsmith has very few rivals. As a poet, "grace marks Goldsmith rather than power—'sweetness' rather than 'light.' "* Though much of his poetry is didactic, he had a true poetic instinct. *He is certainly one of the most charming descriptive poets.*

**The Deserted Village**—*The Deserted Village* was published in May 1770, and ran through six editions before the year closed. It is a didactic poem in which Goldsmith mourns the growth of wealth and the decay of the bold peasantry, that characterised England and Ireland in the middle of the 18th century and after.

*The 'Sweet Auburn' of the poem has been identified with Lissoy, Goldsmith's favourite Irish village where he was brought up.*

Lord Macaulay vehemently asserts that Auburn is not Lissoy, that there never was any such village as Auburn in Ireland.

"But indeed it is of little consequence whether we say that Auburn is an English village, or insist that it is only Lissoy idealised, as long as the thing is true in itself." (Black).

The present short piece is only an extract from Goldsmith's larger poem *The Deserted Village*, and hence the title is not properly applicable. Strictly speaking, the piece should be called *The Village Preacher and the Village Schoolmaster*, sketches of which occur in the original poem. [The original poem is called *The Deserted Village* because it is a lament over a village which was once populous but which now stands deserted and desolate.]

**Source**—*The portrait of the village preacher was suggested by the character of Goldsmith's father who was a clergyman. His was an ideal character, and Goldsmith pays a fine tribute to it in the present sketch. It may be mentioned here that the poet's uncle and elder brother, too, were typical clergymen, and their lives might have also suggested material for the village preacher's portrait as drawn here.*

*The original of the village schoolmaster was, it has been pointed out, Paddy Byrne who kept a school at Lissoy, which was attended by the poet in his boyhood.*

**Brief Criticism**—*The sketches of the village preacher and the village schoolmaster are little masterpieces. Many of the lines are oft-quoted and have passed into the current coin of the English language,—such as "passing rich with forty pounds a year", "His pity gave ere charity began," "To relieve the wretched was his pride, and even his failings leaned to virtue's side", "And fools who came to scoff remained to pray," "The day's disaster in his morning face", "For even though vanquished he could argue still," and "that one small head could carry all he knew." There are again realistic descriptions which grow into vivid pictures such as those of the broken soldier telling his story, the children plucking at the gown of the preacher, the experience of the poet and other boys of the schoolmaster's rod, etc. Humour is another element that has lent an additional grace to the description of the village pedagogue. *The Deserted Village* belongs to the class of didactic poetry, but there is no intrusive didacticism here.*

## SUBSTANCE

### (a) The village preacher

The village preacher lived in his humble dwelling quite satisfied with the modest income of forty pounds a year. He stuck to his post, his humble and pious way of life, neither flattering anybody nor seeking self-advancement, but trying his level best to uplift the wretched. His house was famous for hospitality; the old beggar, the ruined spendthrift, the disabled soldier found ready shelter there. The village preacher was a kind-hearted man. He helped all who sought his help without caring to know whether they deserved his help or not. His heart melted at the mere recital of distress, so that he gave not from charity but from pity.

He had short-comings too, such as excessive charity, but these sprang out of his generous disposition and could be regarded as virtues carried to excess. He was prompt in carrying out his duties. He was never tired of teaching people how to live a better life, and, what was more, himself set an example to allure them to the joys of heaven. He stood by the dying man's bedside, and gave him spiritual comfort and restored his faith in God.

At church his simple quiet looks added to the beauty and dignity of the holy place of worship. Religious teachings as they fell from his eloquent lips carried double weight and appealing power melting the hearts of scoffers even. At the end of the service he would be surrounded by honest rustics, and even children would pluck at his gown to be favoured with his genial smile. Thus he was loved and respected by all, but feared by none. He too loved the villagers warmly; he was happy when they were happy, and shed tears when they suffered. But though his heart with all its laughter and tears was given to them, his mind was lifted far above the petty troubles of life and communicated with God.

### (b) The Village Schoolmaster.

The Village Schoolmaster held his school in his noisy mansion. He was expert in managing little children. A strict disciplinarian with fearful looks he was dreaded by all the boys, especially by those who kept away from school and neglected



their studies. From his very appearance as he entered the schoolroom the boys knew what would be their fate during the day. They pretended to laugh at the jokes he cut only to please him. Whenever he looked angry, the terrible news would be carried rapidly in soft whispers from boy to boy. But in spite of his outward severity he was a good man, only excessively fond of learning. The villagers one and all regarded him as a prodigy. He was able to write and work out sums, to measure lands and presage correctly terms and tides. Moreover he was regarded as an expert debator, one who though vanquished could go on arguing still. He was fond of using big high-sounding words which made the illiterate rustics stare at him in wonder and admiration. But now everything is gone, even the very place of his triumph is forgotten.

### Analysis.

#### A. The Village Preacher :—

I. The village preacher's house, its site. (ll. 1—4.)

II. The character of the preacher. (ll. 5—56.)

(a) His popularity ;

(b) His satisfaction with his small income ; and the independence of his character.

(c) His kindness and hospitality to all the destitute and miserable people ; how these were virtues only carried to excess.

(d) His short-comings ; how these also were virtues only carried to excess.

(e) His endeavours to promote the moral and spiritual welfare of his parishioners.

(f) The preacher at the bedside of a dying man ; his commanding personality.

(g) The preacher at church—his eloquent appeal to the congregation—how it went home to even the most obdurate heart ; the love and respect he commanded from all people, young and old ; how his mind communed with God, and enjoyed the brightness of Heaven.

**B. The Village Schoolmaster :—**

I. The site of his school. (ll 57—60)

II. The schoolmaster himself. (ll. 61—82)

(a) A strict disciplinarian dreaded by his pupils. (b) His jokes ; (c) his fondness for learning which made him so severe ; (d) he had after all a kind heart ; (e) his immense popularity due to his learning and debating power ; his fondness for the use of learned words.

**Metre**—Iambic pentameter, one line rhyming with another (Heroic couplet).

**Notes, Explanations, References, etc.**

*Deserted village*—a village deserted (abandoned) by its inhabitants and fallen into decay.

**Stanza 1.**

**Prose Order**:—Near yonder copse.....and where many a garden flower still grows wild ;.....disclose the place, rose the village.....mansion. He was a man dear to all the country.....year. He ran his godly race remote from towns, nor had ever.....place ; he (was) unpractised to fawn.....hour ; (for) his heart had learned to prize far other aims, (he being) more skilled.....rise. His house.....pain : the long-remembered beggar whose beard.....breast, was his guest.....woe, (he being) careless to scan their merits or their faults, his pity.....began.

**Substance**—*The poet describes the house, the character and the guests of the village preacher.* The village preacher lived in a modest house, satisfied with a modest income. He could not flatter the rich and the fashionable people, and, therefore, was not promoted to a higher post with a higher salary. But he was perfectly satisfied with the work of saving the souls of his parishioners. His charity extended to all. His soft tender heart melted at once at the slightest recital of sorrow, and, therefore, he helped others readily without any discrimination.

**Paraphrase**—**The house of the preacher.** Not far from the shrub there was a beautiful garden which once looked splendid with nice flowers. A good many of those flowers

might be seen even now growing wild. It was here that the village preacher's humble dwelling stood, its site is now marked by a few torn shrubs only. (ll. 1—4)

**The preacher himself**—He was a man loved and respected by all the people of the country. His frugal habits made him live quite satisfied with the modest income of forty pounds a year. Far away from the din and bustle of towns he lived a saintly life. He had no desire to change his humble position in life. He was not accustomed to flatter others or to seek for power, by changing his political or religious opinions to meet the changing fashion of the hour. He was no time-server because his heart had learned to value far nobler ideals in life than raising himself to a higher position in life; thus he devoted himself solely to the noble task of bettering the moral and material condition of the wretched people who needed his help. (ll. 5—12).

**His guests, (i.e., the people whom he helped at home).**

His house was regularly visited by the wandering beggars; he rebuked their aimless wanderings no doubt, but always helped them with money to relieve their distress. The beggar whose flowing white beard swept over his breast, was a familiar guest at his house and received his hospitality. The prodigal who had run through his property and had been humbled by poverty, sought relationship with him and was not refused. The infirm disabled soldier too was cordially welcomed to stay at his house, and he sat by the hearth and passed the night in talking over the feats of his heroism. Sometimes the soldier wept over the wounds he had received in the wars. Sometimes again, when his tales of misery had been finished, he would talk of the victories he had gained. In relating them he would grow so much excited that he would put his crutch upon his shoulder as if it were a gun, and show how battles were won by him. Highly pleased with his guests the good preacher glowed with sympathy and pleasure, and completely lost sight of their defects and short-comings remembering only their woes. He was not anxious to note either their merits or their faults. He helped them not so much out of charity as out of pity, for his heart melted at the mere sight of sorrow, and in such a case discrimination was out of the question. (ll. 13—26.)

**Notes :—***Yonder*—Notice how the use of this word serves as a graphic touch adding vividness to the description and bringing the scene before our eyes as it were.

*Copse*—coppice, a wood of small growth for periodical cutting; "a collection of small trees suitable for firewood".

*The garden*—This is an instance of 'particularising *the*'. Goldsmith is referring to the garden of the village, which still now exists; only it lies now deserted.

*Smiled*—looked gay and bright on account of the various kinds of beautiful flowers that blossomed there.

*Still*—yet; even now. This adverb modifies 'grows'.

*Many a.....grows wild*—Many garden flowers are still growing though the garden lies uncared for.

*Many a*—Notice that this phrase is followed by singular nouns whereas "a many" is followed by plural ones: though the sense is plural in both the cases.

In the phrase "many a" "a" = one; "many a man" means "many times one man" or "many men." Hence "many" has here the force of a Multiplicative numeral. (See Nesfield's Grammar, p. 164).

*Garden flower*—as opposed to the flower that grows uncared for. "Garden flowers cannot be wild flowers in the ordinary sense of the word, *i.e.*, flowers which grow spontaneously like the daisy, etc. The flowers in the text were flowers which sprang up from the seed of those which had been nursed when the garden was in a state of cultivation"—Barrett.

*Wild*—uncultivated; natural. This has the force of an 'adverb'; it completes the sense of 'grows.'

*Where once the garden.....wild*—The poet means that once the garden was full of beautiful flowers and was properly cared for; some flowers and a few torn shrubs are the only traces left now of this beautiful garden.

*There*—redundant but used for the sake of emphasis.

*Torn*—Participial adjective from 'tear'. *Shrubs*—bushes.

*Disclose*—reveal; mark; indicate.

*The place*—the site or position of the house.

*Where a few torn.....disclose*—The poet means to say that the house of the preacher can no longer be found, but a few shrubs still mark out the place where it stood. In other words, the preacher's house stood where now the shrubs grow.

*The village preacher*—the clergyman of the village. As we have pointed out in the Introduction, the original of the village preacher was the poet's father who was the curate of Lissoy where Goldsmith passed his boyhood. There are some commentators, however, who think that Goldsmith is describing here his elder brother Henry or his uncle Contarine, both of whom were good clergymen.

*Modest mansion*—humble house.

**N. B.**—The word 'mansion' was used by the 18th century poets in the general sense of 'dwelling house.' Properly it means 'the house of the lord of the manor'; and it is used in modern English in the sense of 'a splendid house.'

*Rose*—stood; was situated.

*A man.....dear*—The agreeable manners of the preacher and his simplicity of life made him an object of love and respect to all the neighbouring people.

*The country*—This word means here 'the neighbouring rural area'. It has been used not in the wider sense (C<sup>7</sup>), but in the narrower sense of the countryside.

**[N. B.**—It is an example of 'container for the contained' (fig. Metonymy); it means not the place, but those who dwell there.]

*Passing rich*—(1) exceedingly rich; very rich. 'Passing' is an adverb here. (2) It may also mean 'passing for a rich man'. But the former meaning is better. *Passing*—(1) surpassingly; exceedingly; (2) being considered. *Forty pounds a year*—Forty pounds were a curate's annual income about the middle of the 18th century. (A pound at present = 13½ rupees).

*And passing rich.....year*—**Expl.** This may be explained in two ways:

(1) The village preacher was contented with little. His habits were frugal, and, therefore, to him forty pounds a year

meant wealth enough, because it enabled him to meet all his wants.

(2) With the income of forty pounds a year the preacher passed for a rich man in the eyes of the humble villagers who are generally poor. (We must remember that forty pounds had more purchasing power in the 18th century than now. Living was not so costly then).

But the first explanation is to be preferred, for we must bear in mind that Goldsmith is describing the character of the village preacher. His contentment with his small income shows how simple and frugal his habits must have been. "Plain living and high thinking" was the motto of his life.

*Remote (adv.)*—far away. *Godly*—pious; saintly. *Race*—life; career. This is the cognate object of 'ran'. *Godly race*—(1) the life of a clergyman; (2) a saintly life. The second meaning is better. This use of 'race' in the sense of 'life' is Biblical.

*Remote from.....race*—Far away from the attractive pleasures of towns and cities ("far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" in the words of Gray) the village preacher lived a saintly life.

*Nor e'er had changed*—never changed his humble position in life.

*His place*—The word 'place' does not mean here "village" or "dwelling-place" (as some annotators wrongly explain); but it means "post", "position". This word was especially used of political appointments. Cf. *place-hunter*; *place-seeker*. Prof. Hales gives the correct interpretation.

*Nor.....place—Expl.* He was thoroughly contented with his humble post; he neither changed it for a more lucrative post, nor ever had the desire to change it.

*Unpractised*—untrained; unaccustomed, i.e., disinclined. *Fawn*—flatter. *Unpractised he to fawn*—He was not accustomed to flatter others; he neither liked nor knew to flatter others for a higher position in life.

*Seek for power*—try to acquire power or influence over others by securing some higher post in life. *Doctrines*—religious (or political) principles. *Varying hour*—changing circumstances. *Varying*—changing.

*By doctrines.....hour*—by changing his principles and beliefs just to suit the times ; by changing his religious beliefs to please the great men who are in power simply because they do not like these beliefs or principles.

*Doctrines.....hour*—This is supposed to be an indirect allusion to the Vicar of Bray, who is said to have been an independent under Cromwell, an Episcopalian under Charles II, a Papist under James II, and a Moderate Protestant under William and Mary, *changing quickly his religious principles to keep his post and position.*

*Unpractised he.....varying hour*—Expl. In these lines Goldsmith pays a fine tribute to the character of the village preacher. Two prominent features of his character are painted here. First, he was not a man to flatter the rich and great men for the sake of securing a high post. Secondly, he was no time-server. He stuck fast to his religious principles and would not change them for love of wealth or power.

Generally, those persons rise in life who can flatter the rich and other great people who hold high offices in the government ; those men also are promoted who can change their principles according to the changing needs of the time and circumstances. But the village preacher had neither of these gifts. Hence he was never promoted to a higher post.

*Far other aims*—far different objects, i.e., far nobler ideals. *Other*—different. *Prize*—(verb) value. *Skilled*—able. *To raise*—(causative of 'rise') to improve characters and the condition of. *The wretched*—the poor miserable men. *Than to rise*—than to better his own condition. Notice the contrast between 'raise' and 'rise' here.

*Far other aims.....rise*—Expl. The village preacher had learned to value ideals which were very different from worldly prosperity. He had no mind to advance himself in life ; he rather liked to help the poor people out of their difficulties and elevate their characters. His aims in life were surely great ; and his genius was more suited to carry out these aims than to raise himself to a better position.

**N. B.**—Goldsmith here refers to the ideal duty of a true clergyman. A true priest should not aim at raising himself ; his

main duty is to elevate the characters and better the condition of those people who come in touch with him.

*Vagrant train*—wandering beggars; poor vagabonds. *Train*—company; band.

*His house...train*—This line indicates how great the preacher's charity was. He was famous for his hospitality which was accorded even to the undeserving. He helped all who sought his help.

*Child*—rebuked. *Their wanderings*—their idle, wandering habits.

*Relieved*—alleviated; removed. *Their pain*—their miseries; their sufferings. *Relieved their pain*—i.e., gave them alms.

*His house.....pain*—**Expl.** The village preacher, though poor, was famous for hospitality. All homeless vagabonds sought shelter at his house, and he readily gave it. No doubt he took them to task for living an aimless life, but he was not one of those who rebuke the faults of others without giving them practical help. So he tried his level best to remove their misery, and to help them out of their difficulties.

*The long-remembered beggar*—The beggar who was a familiar figure in the locality and whose face was so well-known because of his frequent visits. The beggar was 'long-remembered' because of his frequent visits.

*Was his guest*—was a frequent visitor to the house of the village preacher and was well entertained. *Descending*—flowing down. *Swept*—fell over; covered.

*His aged breast*—the breast of the old beggar. ['Aged is an instance of *transferred epithet*. Cf. *The Elegy*—'The ploughman homeward plods his weary way'.]

*The long-remembered.....breast*—**Expl.** This shows how kind a man the preacher was. The aged beggar whose long flowing beard had covered his breast was a familiar figure at the preacher's house. The beggar probably was rudely treated elsewhere; hence he paid frequent visits to the clergyman's house where he was hospitably received. The preacher was so good that he did not decline to dine with a poor beggar at the same table. (He treated all men as his brethren; and he knew that to feed the poor was to feed God.)



*The ruined spendthrift*—The prodigal who had wasted his wealth; the man who was once rich but who had brought poverty on himself by his extravagance. *Ruined*—impoverished; bankrupt. *Spendthrift*—prodigal.

*Now no longer proud*—because the cause of his pride, viz., his wealth was gone; he has been completely humbled by his poverty. *Claimed kindred there*—sought relationship with the preacher. When he was wealthy he did not care to pay a visit to the poor preacher. But now in his poverty he sought the preacher's hospitality saying that he was connected with him by blood. N.B.—In *The Vicar of Wakefield* Goldsmith describes how "cousins of the fortieth remove" came to the house of the Vicar and ate his bread.

*Claimed*—sought. *Kindred*—relationship. *There*—at the house of the preacher. *And had his claims allowed*—N.B. The village preacher was so good that he did not turn the man out of his house, but allowed him to stay there and dine with him.

*Had his claims allowed*—i.e., was received hospitably as a relative. *Allowed*—admitted. The good preacher, moved by his distress, admitted that he was a relative of his, and asked him to stay with him. Of course, the man was no relative of the preacher, but since he called himself so, the preacher regarded him as such.

*The broken soldier*—The soldier crippled or disabled in battle or by disease and who could not serve his country any more. Such soldiers were familiar figures when this poem was written, for the Seven Years' War had just been over. *Bade*—bidden; asked; used as the past participle of 'bid.' This form is incorrect. *Bidden* and *bid* are the only correct forms used. *Bade* is the form of past tense only.

*Kindly bade to stay*—politely requested to stay. The clergyman was kind enough to ask the disabled soldier to stay and dine with him.

*Kindly*—(1) out of pity for his disabled state; (2) politely or cordially.

*Sat by his fire*—warmed himself by the fireside of the preacher's house. This shows that the time was winter, and the soldier and the beggar, unable to sleep out, came to the preacher's house.

*Talked the night away*—passed the whole night in talking (telling stories of battles, etc.)

**N.B.**—Those who listened to his stories were so enchanted that they did not know how the night passed away; they thought it had passed away too soon.

*Wept over his wounds*—The soldier shed tears when he told the stories of war in which he had received wounds which disabled him for life. *Tales of sorrow*—stories of his grief. *Tales*—nominative absolute. *Tales of sorrow done*—the tales of sorrow being done or finished (absolute construction). *Shouldered his crutch etc.*—The tales of woe being done, the soldier went to recount tales of victory; i.e., when his weeping was over he would grow so excited in telling the story of his victories that he would actually place his crutch upon his shoulder, as if the crutch were a gun, and would triumphantly show how he and his comrades defeated the enemy.

*Shouldered*—placed upon his shoulder. *Crutch*—the stick or staff of a lame man. The soldier was disabled, lame and old; so he walked with the help of a crutch. *Showed*—described; demonstrated. *How fields were won*—how the battles were fought and victories gained. *The broken soldier.....won*—**Expl.** The soldier disabled for further service was one of the guests of the village preacher. The good clergyman pitying his condition often asked him to spend the winter evening at his house. Thus requested to stay, the soldier would sit by the fireside to warm himself and would entertain all by telling stories of battle and adventure and hold them spell-bound so that they would not know how the night passed away. He would sometimes weep in recounting how he got his wounds which disabled him for ever. When these sorrowful tales would be over, he would recount the thrilling stories of his victories, and in doing so he would get so much excited that he would place his crutch upon his shoulder as if he were carrying a gun, and show how he defeated the enemy and won the victory.

*Pleased with his guests*—happy in the company of his guests. *The good man*—the kind-hearted clergyman. *Learned to glow*—(1) became animated with joy; became very happy; (2) was warmed into sympathy. *And quite forgot.....woe*—He was so

moved by their miseries that he completely forgot their failings to which these miseries were due. *Vices*—faults; defects and failings. *In their woe*—in consequence of their woes; moved by the misery of their life. *Careless*—heedless for the time being; unmindful; indifferent. This adjective qualifies "good man", i.e., the preacher. Some think that this adjective qualifies 'pity'. *Merits*—good qualities; here it means deserts. *Faults*—defects; demerits. *To scan*—to examine minutely and critically. *Careless.....scan*—being perfectly indifferent to their merits and demerits; he was so moved by their misery that he did not just then care to examine minutely whether they deserved his charity or not.

*Careless*—N. B. "It would be a poor compliment to the good clergyman to suppose that this word conveyed the notion of heedlessness or indifference. It rather means that he did not choose just then in their misery to examine too closely into their characters. Their character was uncertain, their wretchedness was certain, and, bad or good, they needed relief".—Barrett.

*Pity*—compassion. *Charity*—generosity. Here it is used in the sense of 'discriminate charity'; 'reasoned benevolence.'

*His pity gave.....began*—An oft-quoted line. His heart was so melted by pity that he readily helped his guests in distress, without caring to see whether they deserved any help or not.

*Careless their merits.....began*—**Expl.** The poet shows here how sympathetic the heart of the village preacher was. It readily melted at the sight of the misery of others making the preacher indifferent to either their merits or defects. He did not examine critically just then whether they were worthy of his charity or not. He rendered ready help. He gave out of pity and sympathy, and not out of reasoned charity.

N. B.—"Charity" is a deliberate formal act—we give out of charity when we are perfectly convinced that a particular case deserves help at our hands. 'Pity,' is spontaneous; when we help a man out of sheer pity we have scarcely any time to consider whether he deserves it or not. The village preacher helped the poor out of pity, for his heart was soft and tender.

### Stanza 2.

**Prose Order**—Thus.....side; but (being) prompt in his duty at every call,.....all. And, as a bird tries each fond endear-

ment.....way. The reverend champion stood beside the bed .....pain dismayed (it) by turns. At.....came down to raise the trembling wretch.....praise.

**Substance**—The village preacher was eager to help the distressed people out of their misery and his only fault (if fault it could be called) was his over-eagerness to help the poor which made him often indiscreet in exercising his charity. But he was a true pastor, and both by precept and example he taught others to lead a higher life. His presence inspired a dying man with faith in God and hope of a better life after death.

**Paraphrase**—*The character of the Preacher as shown in his charity and teachings* (ll. 27—40).

Thus the village preacher considered himself proud if he could find an opportunity to help the poor and the suffering; and it may be noted here that his shortcomings were the results of his kind-hearted benevolence which sometimes went to excess. But he was ever ready to discharge his duty as a clergyman faithfully. He was at everybody's service, feeling and praying for all. And just as a motherbird in trying to induce her young ones, newly furnished with feathers, to fly up into the sky, herself sets the example first, so the village preacher tried his level best to lead his people to a better life by encouragement and rebuke, but first setting the example of a good life himself.

He stood praying by the bed-side of a dying man whose mind was agitated by alternate emotions of sorrow (for his past action), guilt (he had committed), and pain (he was suffering from). Under his magic influence hopelessness and pain fled from the heart of the dying man; a feeling of spiritual comfort cheered his last moment and his last words were those in praise of God.

*To relieve the wretched*—to remove the sufferings of the distressed people. *Pride*—chief source of his pleasure. It is not used here in any bad sense. *Thus to relieve.....pride*—He felt great pleasure in helping the poor and the needy as has been described above. *Failings*—petty faults; weaknesses. This refers to the fault of *indiscriminate* charity. *Leaned to Virtue's side*—inclined towards the side of virtue, i.e., might be regarded as virtue carried to excess.

*Thus to relieve.....side*—**Expl.** Goldsmith speaks here of the excessive kindness of the village preacher which often led

him to help a man who did not deserve any help. But the preacher was a very kind-hearted man, and the chief source of his pleasure was to help the distressed people. No doubt sometimes his charity ran to excess; no doubt sometimes he helped those who did not deserve any help. Such an act might be regarded as a fault or weakness; but we must bear in mind that these faults—if they could be called faults—sprang from excess of qualities which would have been virtues if possessed in a moderate degree. If he erred, he erred on the side of virtue. In plain English his only fault was that he was over-charitable. Other faults he had none.

*But*—The force of 'but' lies in the fact that though the preacher was over-charitable, he was mindful of his duties as a clergyman. *In his duty*—in the exercise of his functions as a clergyman.

*N. B.*—The duty of a preacher is to see that the people who have been left to his care become virtuous. The village preacher was an ideal clergyman in this respect.

*Prompt*—ready. *At every call*—whenever any occasion arose; at every call of duty. *Prompt.....call*—The village preacher never neglected to look after the moral welfare of the people who were entrusted to his care.

*Watched*—vigilantly observed the behaviour of the people left to his care; kept always an attentive eye on them. *Wept*—wept in sorrow for their short-comings; was sorry to see even a single man going astray. *Prayed*—prayed to God that they might come back to the right path. *Felt for all*—sympathised with them. *Each fond endearment*—each loving device or gesture; device coming out of its affection for its young ones.

This refers to the repeated short flights and returns of the mother-bird when it tries to teach its young ones the use of their wings. *Tries*—tests; resorts to. *To tempt*—to allure; to persuade.

*New-fledged*—lately furnished with wings. *Offspring*—young ones. *To the skies*—in the direction of the skies. *He*—the village preacher. *Tried*—resorted to. *Aid*—device; means. *Reproved*—rebuked. *Dull delay*—sluggish procrastination; অনর্থক দীর্ঘত্বতা; কুঁড়েবি।

This "dull delay" was the delay of those who were unmoved by the clergyman's appeals

*Allured*—tempted ; attracted. *Brighter worlds*—worlds brighter than this world of ours, *i.e.*, Heaven. [The plural is only poetical as Barrett points out.] *Allured to brighter worlds*—"endeavoured to attract by holding before their eyes the glorious nature of the reward." He pointed out that if they led virtuous lives, God would reward them after death *He led the way*—set a good example by living a good life himself ; showed them how to live a good life.

**N. B.**—There is the proverb—"Example is better than precept." The village preacher knew it full well ; and he taught people not only by precepts but also by noble examples. He himself was an example of the noble life which he asked others to live.

*And, as a bird.....led the way*—**Expl.** In this beautiful simile Goldsmith compares the village preacher to a parent bird, for the preacher in trying to teach others how to travel towards brighter worlds (*i.e.*, heaven) resembled a parent bird when it tries to teach its young ones how to soar in the sky. Just as a parent bird resorts to all possible means to teach its young ones who have just been furnished with feathers, how to fly to the sky, so the village preacher resorted to all possible means to admonish the people left to his care to live a virtuous life. He held out before them the glorious prospect of heavenly happiness after death if they lived nobly ; he took them to task if they were idling away their lives ; and what was more, like a parent bird showing how to fly, he himself set an example of the good life he asked others to live. Thus he taught others not only by precepts but also by his own example. [Precept without example is of no value. The preacher's noble life was a constant, living example to all ; so his precepts had real effect.]

Mark the points of similarity in the simile ; mother-bird = preacher ; fond endearment (of the mother-bird) = art (of the preacher) ; offspring (of the bird) = parishioners (of the preacher) ; the skies = brighter worlds (Heaven).

*Beside the bed etc.*—*i.e.*, by a death-bed.

**N. B.**—It is the duty of a clergyman to attend the bed of a man about to die in order to pray there for the welfare of his soul.

*Parting*—i.e., departing. [N.B.—‘*Parting*’ is often used for ‘departing’. Cf. Gray’s *Elegy*—“The curfew tolls the knell of *parting* day;” and “On some fond breast the *parting* soul relies.”]

*Parting life*—dying man. *Was lain*—was placed; was lying. *Sorrow*—remorse for the sins committed by him. It does not probably mean “sorrow at the thought of leaving his near and dear ones.” *Guilt*—feeling of guilt; thought of guilt. *Pain*—This is the pain caused by his disease. *By turns*—alternately. *Dismayed*—appalled; frightened. Understand ‘him’ after ‘dismayed’. *By turns dismayed*—He (the dying man) was so troubled and unnerved by these feelings that he was unable to pray to God for mercy.

*Reverend*—venerable. *Champion*—warrior for the truth.

N.B.—A champion is one who fights for another; here the dying man could not fight with the devil; so the village preacher stood as his champion and drove away the devil from his mind. He was also the champion of God, the soldier of Christ, and his main duty was to fight for the truth and against evil. So he established faith and hope in the mind of the dying man.

*Stood*—prayed standing. *At his control*—under his magic influence. *Despair*—hopelessness. *Anguish*—mental agony. *Fled*—went away from; left. *The struggling soul*—the soul of the dying man labouring in pain and anguish. *Fled the struggling soul*—completely left the dying man who was suffering from mental and bodily pain. *Comfort*—solace.

*Came down*—descended from heaven as it were like a good angel. *The trembling wretch*—the sinner who was trembling in fear. *To raise*—to sustain; to inspire with courage and hope. *Comfort came.....to raise*—Comfort is a heavenly quality; it is compared to an angel here. Like a good angel coming down to this world from heaven, comfort came and settled in the breast of the dying man.

[There is also an allusion to the fact that comfort is the attribute of the Holy Ghost—the third person of the Christian Trinity. It is the Holy Ghost who comforts a sinner. Here the Holy Ghost descended from heaven and filled the heart of the dying man with comfort, hope and courage.]

*His last faltering accents*—the last word of the dying man uttered with great difficulty on account of his weakness. *Faltering*—uttered faintly because of his weakness. *Accents*—words. *Whispered*—murmured. *Praise*—praise of God ; a hymn of God's glory, *i.e.*, a prayer.

N. B.—Praise does not mean here praise of the preacher as some annotators wrongly think. •

*Beside the bed.....whispered praise*—**Expl.** In these lines Goldsmith describes the village preacher standing by the death-bed of one of his parishioners. The mind of the dying man was successively filled with sorrow (for his past sins), and the thought of his own guilt, and he was totally unnerved by all these feelings as well as by the pains caused by his fatal disease. He could not therefore pray to God. But at such a time the presence of the village preacher by his bedside worked miracles. Under the village preacher's magic influence all unholy passions fled away from the dying man, and his mind was filled with comfort and hope of God's mercy, so that in his last moments he fixed his mind upon God and in his faint weak voice murmured the words of a prayer in praise of God. [He died a peaceful death comforted by the thought that the All-merciful would forgive him the sins of his life.]

### Stanza 3. (The preacher at church, 11. 41—56.)

**Prose Order**—At church, his looks, with meek.....grace, adorned the venerable place ; truth.....pray. The service past, each honest rustic ran around the pious man, with steady zeal ; even children followed (him) with.....smile. His ready smile expressed a parent's warmth ; their welfare.....cares distressed (him) ; his heart.....griefs were given to them, but all.....heaven ; as some.....vale, and leaves the storm midway, though the rolling clouds are spread round its breast, eternal sunshine.....its head.

**Substance**—The poet now describes the village preacher at church. His was an inspiring personality. All—even the unbelievers—were impressed by his eloquent appeal and listened to him spell-bound. His personal charm was also very great. Both grown-up men and little children sought his company.

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eagerly, and found delight and comfort in his smile and conversation. But above all, he was a man devoted to God.

**Paraphrase**—At church the meek simplicity of his appearance added to the beauty and holiness of the place. Teachings from the Bible came out of his lips with a double force—that of precept and earnest eloquence and even unbelievers who came on purpose to ridicule him were so struck by his eloquence and earnestness that they remained to pray. At the end of the church service the simple folk of the village gathered round him. Even children followed him and clutched at his gown just to attract his notice and be favoured with his sweet smiles. The good priest always smiled upon them with the warm love of an affectionate father. He was glad when they were happy, and sorry when they were unhappy. He gave them his love and sympathy no doubt; but his serious thoughts were all turned to God. Thus he resembled some tall and steep rock that rises from the valley, is troubled with storms and clouds in its middle parts, but enjoys genial sunshine on its summits for ever.

*At church*—when the village preacher stood on the pulpit of the church and delivered his sermon. *With meek and unaffected grace*—with an expression of piety that was modest, simple and sincere. *Meek*—mild; gentle. *Unaffected*—artless; simple and sincere. *Grace*—beauty; here it refers to the holy looks and dignified demeanour of the preacher.

*Adorned*—graced; added to the beauty of. *The venerable place*—the sacred place of worship, i.e., the church. Some unnecessarily take it to mean the 'pulpit.' *Truth*—religious truths; (here) the teachings of the Bible.

*From his lips*—issuing out of his lips; coming out of his lips; as they fell from his lips. *Prevailed*—became effective; produced a lasting impression on the minds of the people. *With double sway*—with redoubled force.

*Double sway*—N.B. The religious teachings of the Bible are impressive in themselves; but these were made more impressive by the earnest manner of the village preacher.

*Fools*—foolish unbelievers; sceptics.

**N.B.**—When Goldsmith wrote this poem there were many persons in England who had no faith in God; and religion was openly ridiculed.

*To pray*—for the purpose of worshipping God. Gerundial Infinitive denoting purpose, qualifying the verb 'remained.'

*Truth from his lips.....pray—Exp!*. In these lines Goldsmith describes the eloquence and earnestness of the village preacher when he preached in the church. There were many unbelievers who went to church for the purpose of ridiculing religion, but they were so much impressed by the earnestness of the preacher's teachings that they remained there for the purpose of worship, being conscience-struck. The religious teachings of the Bible are noble; but they were made doubly noble and impressive by the earnest manner of the preacher's delivery.

*The service past*—the holy service in the church being over. This is an absolute construction. *Service*—divine service; worship of God. *Pious*—godly. *Steady*—firm; steadfast. *Zeal*—eagerness; enthusiasm.

*With steady zeal*—with firm attachment. This denotes how much the people loved the village preacher, and what a firm faith they had in him.

*Honest*—artless. *Rustic*—villager; used in a good sense here. Most of these villagers were simple peasants.

*Even children etc.*—This brings into prominence another trait of the preacher's character. He was loved by everybody. He was respected by all but feared by none. He was accessible to all, even to children. *Endearing*—pleasing. *Wile*—trick; device.

*Plucked*—clutched at; pulled at. This would be one of their endearing wiles. *To share*—Gerundial Infinitive denoting purpose. *To share the good man's smile*—in order to be favoured with the smile of the preacher who greatly loved the children.

*Ready smile*—the smile which was always upon his lips. *A parent's warmth expressed*—revealed the fatherly love he felt for them all. *Parent's warmth*—warm love equal to that of a father for his children. *Their welfare*—their happiness. *Cares*—anxieties. *Distressed*—pained him.

*Their welfare.....distressed*—He was happy when they were happy; he was sorrowful when they suffered from misery. *To them.....given*—His love and sorrow and sympathy were

bestowed entirely on them. They were the objects of his love and grief.

*Serious thoughts*—grave, solemn thoughts. *Had rest in Heaven*—(1) were fixed on heaven; (2) enjoyed rest because of his firm faith in God.

*To them his heart...Heaven—Expl.* The preacher kept himself engaged in relieving the cares and miseries of those who were entrusted to his care. He loved them deeply no doubt;—his love, sorrow and sympathies were for them;—but his more solemn and serious thoughts were only for God.

**N. B.**—Barrett explains the lines in a somewhat different way. He finds no contrast in 'but.' We quote below his comments:—

"It would seem that the griefs were included in these serious thoughts, as the two cannot be opposed to each other, the meaning being that though he grieved with their grief and sympathised in their feelings, yet he looked confidently to Heaven (*i. e.*, rested or relied on heaven) for the solution and arrangement of all these troubles. The 'rolling clouds' are the 'griefs' mentioned, and the inexplicable dispensations of Providence, while by the eternal sunshine is typified the final explanation and rectifying in another world of all that has seemed wrong and mysterious in this. It seems clear that by the clouds and the sunshine, the mystery of the existence of evil in this world, and the solution of all doubts in the next world are respectively signified."

*As some tall cliff*—The village preacher giving his heart to the villagers and his mind to God is compared to a tall cliff which rises from the valley, is enveloped by storms in the middle, but enjoys pure sunshine at the top.

*Cliff*—lofty hill. *Lifts*—raises. *Awful*—majestic; imposing; awe-inspiring; মহান্। *Awful form*—majestic height. *Swells*—displays its lofty form; towers high up.

*Swells from the vale*—rises straight and steep from the broad base of the valley. (So also the preacher stood above the common people—the vale). *Vale*—valley.

*Midway*—in the middle; half way up its heights; মধ্যভাগে। *Midway leaves the storm*—The cliff is so high that the clouds and

storms reach it half-way only, they cannot reach its top ; so also the clergyman's mind (soul) was lifted far above earthly troubles—sorrows.

*Round its breast*—round its central part ; i.e., in the middle. (The breast of the cliff is compared to the heart of the preacher. Clouds and storms gather at the breast of the cliff ; so also sorrow and distress for the sufferings of his parish people assailed the heart of the clergyman.)

*Rolling*—boisterous ; moving with great force and tumult. *Rolling clouds*—In the case of the clergyman this would refer to the clouds of sorrow and distress for his parish people that overtook his heart sometimes. *Eternal*—everlasting ; perpetual.

*Eternal sunshine*—In the case of the hill, this refers to the genial sunlight that shines upon the top of the cliff ; in the case of the clergyman this would refer to God's grace and heavenly happiness with which his mind was filled. *Settles*—gathers ; remains fixed.

*Settles on its head*—(1) The top of the cliff full of sunshine is compared to the mind of the preacher filled with God's grace and heavenly happiness free from the darkening clouds of griefs and troubles. (2) Barrett, however, takes it somewhat differently. "The top of the cliff is above the storm, as the clergyman's anticipated heaven is above the clouds of obscurity that envelop this world." In this case too, the meaning is not very different from that given above.

*As some tall cliff.....on its head*—**Expl.** The village preacher who was sometimes troubled at heart by the cares and troubles of earthly life (due to his sympathy for the people who were his parishioners and came in touch with him) but whose mind soared far above the cares and troubles of earthly life, is compared to a tall cliff or hill. The points of similarity are these :—

- (1) The cliff rises from the valley tall and straight ; so also the lofty-minded preacher had his life among the common men and women ;
- (2) The central parts ('breast') of the cliff are exposed to the storms and clouds ; so the preacher's heart

suffered from time to time from the cares and troubles and sorrows of earthly life (due to his sympathy with his parish people);

- (3) The summit of the cliff is bathed in perpetual sun-shine; so also the preacher's mind soared far above all storms and clouds (all earthly troubles and sorrows) and enjoyed God's grace and serene heavenly happiness.

*Tall cliff* = the lofty-minded village preacher, superior to other men and women in the loftiness of character and ideals; *the vale* = the world of common men and women by whom the preacher was surrounded and among whom he lived; *storm and clouds* (found midway round the breast of the cliff)—earthly troubles and sorrows troubling the heart of the preacher because of his love and sympathy for the sufferings of his parish people; *eternal sun-shine* settling on the top of the cliff—God's grace and serene heavenly happiness in the mind of the preacher, his lofty mind rising above all earthly troubles and sorrows.

## THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER

**Prose Order**—Beside.....way, unprofitably gay with blossomed furze, (or with unprofitably gay and blossomed furze) there the village master skilled to rule, taught his little school in his noisy mansion. He was a severe man, and stern to view.....knew; the boding tremblers had learned well to trace the day's.....face; they laughed full well.....jokes, for he had many a joke; the busy whisper circling round, conveyed full well the dismal.....frowned. Yet.....fault; all the village declared.....too; he could measure lands, presage terms and tides,.....gauge; the person owned his skill in arguing too, for.....still argue; while.....knew. But his fame is all past. The very spot.....forgot.

**Substance**—The poet describes here the village school-master who was a lover of strict discipline, and was feared by all the truants. But his was a kind heart in spite of all his pedantry and 'words of learned length.' He was regarded as a prodigy of learning by the simple villagers. He was skilled in arguing and would never confess to a defeat. But all is changed now; the very spot of his triumphs is utterly forgotten.

**Paraphrase**—By the side of that straggling fence bordering the way, with all its useless pomp of blossoming furze, the village pedagogue, expert in managing classes, taught little children in his house which was full of the noise of young learners as they learned their lessons. He was a strict disciplinarian, very stern to look at. I knew how severe he was, and all boys who kept away from school had a taste of his discipline and severity. The trembling boys, who from long experience had acquired a skill in reading signs, could predict from the appearance of the teacher, as he entered the schoolroom in the morning, what punishments they were to suffer from that day. He had a large stock of jests, and when he cut any joke all the children pretended to be delighted and laughed loudly. Whenever he frowned, the sad news of his anger rapidly spread from boy to boy in soft whispers. Notwithstanding his outward severity he was a kind-hearted man, and if he was ever stern it was because of his love for learning which made him expect an equal love for it from his pupils. The villagers, one and all, declared that he was a learned man. Certainly it could be correctly said that he could write and work out sums, measure the area of lands, and predict the working terms of law-courts and universities as well as the shifting holidays of the year. There was a rumour that he could measure the volume of liquids too. As regards debating power, well, even such a learned man as the clergyman admitted that the schoolmaster was a past master in this art, for he would go on arguing even when he was defeated. When he was debating the illiterate peasants in orderly groups would gather round him, and would be astounded to hear the big, high-sounding words that incessantly flowed from his lips. As they would stare at him, their amazement would grow on more and more to think that a small head could contain so much learning. But all his fame is now a thing of the past. Even the very place where he won victories over his adversaries in debate on a good many occasions is utterly forgotten.

**Beside**—by the side of; near. This word must not be confused with 'besides' which means 'moreover,' 'in addition to'. **Straggling**—thinly scattered; "growing irregularly; untrimmed". **Skirts**—(verb) borders; runs along the border of. **Way**—public way.

*Beside.....way*—near the fence which marks the border of the way and whose stakes (or the posts of the fence) now stand at irregular intervals. *Blossom'd*—flowering; in full bloom. *Furze*—a prickly bush that grows abundantly in England and Ireland. It is also called 'gorse'.

*Unprofitably gay*—(1) splendidly gaudy, 'but unprofitable because the furze serves no useful purpose. The furze is a prickly shrub which is of little use, except for fencing. (2) 'Unprofitably' may also be taken to mean, "without giving pleasure to anybody" because the village is deserted. The first meaning is to be preferred.

*There*—This is redundant; but, as Barrett points out, it emphasizes the locality specified in the preceding lines. *Noisy mansion*—i.e., the schoolroom which was loud with the noise of children who were allowed to learn their lessons aloud. *Skill'd to rule*—experienced in maintaining discipline among school-boys.

**N.B.**—There is here a sarcastic allusion to the fact that the schoolmaster regarded himself as a little king ruling over his subjects (the school-children), and ruling with an iron hand.

*The village master*—The original of this schoolmaster is supposed to have been Paddy Byrne whose school at Lissoy Goldsmith attended. *Severe*—strict. *A man.....was*—he was a strict disciplinarian. *Stern to view*—dreadful to look at; 'stern of aspect'.

*To view*—Gerundial Infinitive (like 'hard to hear') denoting quality, modifying the sense of the adjective 'stern' (stern in respect of appearance). 'View' may also be parsed as a noun (stern to the view of others). *I knew him well*—This denotes that Goldsmith was certainly speaking of his own schoolmaster at Lissoy. He was speaking from personal experience. *Knew him well*—knew very well how severe he was. The poet must have had personal experience of the schoolmaster's discipline. We know that he was not mindful of his studies. He might have been one of those pupils who were beaten black and blue by the teacher.

*Truant*—a boy who absents himself from school. *Every truant knew*—whoever absented himself from school without

leave or neglected his lessons had a taste of the severity of the schoolmaster's discipline.

*Boding*—foreboding; predicting evils from signs. *Tremblers*—boys trembled in fear of punishment. *Boding tremblers*—boys who trembled in fear because they knew the teacher would severely punish them. *To trace*—to find out.

*The day's disasters*—the evils of the day; i.e., the punishment to be meted to them that day; "bad luck, misfortune in the shape of a caning or flogging". *In his morning face*—from the appearance of his face in the morning; from the expression of his face when he first came into the school room. Cf. the proverb "The morning shows the day".

*Well had.....face*—**Expl.** In describing the village schoolmaster Goldsmith says that he was a strict disciplinarian and would severely flog the boys for their neglect of lessons. Constant experience had taught the truant boys how to read his face. From the very expression of his face as he came into the school-room the trembling boys could guess what disasters in the shape of caning or flogging would befall them on that day.

*Full well*—"right loudly". *Counterfeited*—feigned; false. *Glee*—mirth; delight.

*Full well.....had he*—**Expl.** The boys feared their strict school-master very much, and they tried to please him by laughing loudly at all his jokes.

*Many a*—For a note on this, see *Village Preacher*, 2. The noun used after it is always singular. *The busy whisper*—whisper that passed on briskly from boy to boy.

*Circling round*—passing on from one boy to another. *Convey'd*—carried from one to the other. *Dismal*—terrible; gloomy. *Tidings*—news; here news of his frown or displeasure. *Frowned*—looked angrily.

*Full well.....frowned*—**Expl.** When the schoolmaster assumed an angry look, the whole school trembled, and the sad news that he was angry and punishment was at hand would be rapidly carried in whispers from one boy to another. Thus the news of his displeasure spread like wildfire among the boys.

*Yet*—in spite of his severity. *Aught*—anything. *The love he bore to learning*—his fondness for learning; his love of



scholarship. *Was in fault*—was to blame for his severity ; was responsible for his severity.

[Notice that 'fault' rhymes with 'aught'. Barrett calls this a bad rhyme, but he forgets that in the 18th century fault was often pronounced as 'faut' (the 't' being silent)].

*Yet he was.....fault*—**Expl.** The school-master in spite of his severity was a kind-hearted man. If he was ever severe, it was because he was very fond of learning and wished that his boys should be as learned as he. The fault of being severe was not the fault of his nature ; it was rather due to his excessive fondness for learning. This accounted for his being severe with the truants who neglected their lessons.

*The village all*—all the villagers. [An instance of 'container for the thing contained', Fig. Metonymy.] *Declared*—proclaimed openly ; openly acknowledged. *How much he knew*—how vast his scholarship was. *'Twas certain etc.*—This is how the villagers expressed their admiration of his vast learning.

**N.B.**—"The humour of these lines should be noticed. The introduction of this line by the words *'twas certain* masks the poet's pretended consciousness of the magnitude of the statement which he is making. Wonderful and incredible, as it might seem, there was no mistake about the fact of his being able to write even, ay ! more than that, even to cipher ! !"—Barrett.

*Cipher*—work out sums in arithmetic. This was once a very familiar word. *Measure*—survey.

*Terms*—periods of work (as distinguished from vacations) in universities or law courts ; working sessions. The school-master knew when the terms would begin and end.

*Tides*—(1) the moveable feasts (religious festivals) throughout the year. There are certain Christian festivals with fixed dates e.g., Christmas which takes place on the 25th December, every year, but there are other Christian festivals which (like our *दुर्गापूजा*) do not occur on the same dates every year, e.g., Whitsuntide. *The school-master could calculate the dates of these tides or festivals all right.*

(2) periodical rise and fall of the water in seas and rivers.

The first meaning is better.

*Presage*—calculate previously ; foretell. *Even*—This adverb modifies 'gauge', and should come before it. *The story ran*—there was a rumour. *Gauge*—"measure the contents of vessels with a measuring-rod". *In arguing*—in holding a discussion.

*Even the parson.....skill*—The village clergyman admitted the skill of the village school-master in arguments and discussions. The clergyman admitted this in humorous fashion—for the school-master in his debates with the clergyman though beaten would still go on arguing, he would not admit that he was beaten. N.B. The clergyman being regarded as a man of learning, his opinion greatly impressed the simple villagers.

*Parson*—the village preacher. *Own'd*—acknowledged ; testified to. Of course the preacher humourously paid this compliment to the schoolmaster. *For etc.*—Notice the poet's humour. The schoolmaster would never confess that he was defeated ; right or wrong, he would go on arguing, till his opponents were silenced by his big, learned words. *Vanquish'd*—defeated. *Still*—inspite of his being defeated.

*For even though.....still—Expl.* The school-master, though really defeated in a discussion, would never confess his defeat. He would always go on producing argument after argument—till his opponents were silenced by his big, learned thundering words (and not really by his arguments which were often weak). *While*—i.e., while he was discussing with opponents.

*Words of learned length*—big, high-sounding words. [Pedants delight in using such words. These are what Reverend Lal Behari Day calls 'sesquipedalian words, and grandiloquent phraseology' in his *Bengal Peasant Life*.]

N.B. Students should guard themselves against the use of big words. The beauty of style consists in the effective use of simple words.

*Learned*—Transferred epithet, qualifying 'words' and not 'length'. 'Learned words' are big pedantic words.

*Thundering sound*—This goes with 'words'; "words of thundering sound", are high-sounding words. *Amazed*—astonished. *The gazing rustics*—the illiterate villagers who

stood stupidly staring at the school-master. *Ranged around*—assembled all around. 'Ranged' is the past participial adjective qualifying 'rustics'.

*While words.....around*—**Expl.** The village school-master was a pedant, and loved to display his learning when holding discussion on a subject. He used the longest words he could where short and simple words would have done as well or better. The illiterate villagers wondered at the school-master's big words and display of learning, and gathering round him simply gazed and gazed at him in stupid admiration.

*Still they gazed.....grew*—the more they gazed the more they wondered. *That one small head, etc.*—The emphasis is upon the word *one* and not upon *small*. The villagers wondered that *one* human head (which is 'small' at best) should contain such a vast amount of learning. It is not implied that the school-master had a particularly small head. The idea is that a human head, however large-sized it may be, is but a small thing after all. *Carry*—contain. *All he knew*—all his learning; all his knowledge.

*But past is all his fame*—but his reputation as a scholar no longer remains, because his school is gone and he and his admirers are all gone. *Very*—(adj.) exact. *Many a time*—many times; very often. *Spot*—place. *Triumphed*—won victories in arguing—distinguished himself by arguing and displaying his learning. *Is forgot*—is utterly forgotten.

### Model Questions with Answers and Hints.

Q. 1. Reproduce in your own English Goldsmith's description of the village preacher ;

Or

Sketch the character of the village preacher. Who was the original of the village preacher ?

*Ans.* Loved and respected by all but feared by none, contented with a humble post, a small income, the village preacher lived a pious life in a simple house far away from the din and bustle of towns and cities. Pure and upright at heart he could never think of securing promotion through flattery or

or change of principles just to please those in power. He was more skilled to raise others than to raise himself. He was hospitable to all and regarded the poor as his kith and kin. Of an over-generous disposition his heart melted at the sight of the slightest distress of others, and he gave them help readily without caring to scan their merits or faults. He was an ideal pastor, always prompt in responding to the call of duty and never tired of trying to elevate others morally. His pious life was a living example to all. His influence was great, and his personality worked magic upon the heart of a dying sinner restoring him instantly to faith and hope. With looks meek and simple his was a commanding figure at church on Sundays, and because of his sincerity and eloquence his moral teachings went home to every heart. Even scoffers and other kinds of unbelievers were touched by his passionate appeal and were converted. Both grown-up people and children had an easy access to him. They loved and respected him highly; he too loved them warmly, and shared in their joys and sorrows. Thus his heart was given to them, but his mind was devoted to God alone, and enjoyed the brightness and serenity of Heaven.

*The original of the village preacher was mainly Goldsmith's father, and partly the poet's elder brother Henry. His uncle Contarine too was an ideal preacher, and the lives of these three persons, loved and respected by the poet, supplied him with materials for the portrait of the village preacher.*

Q. 2. Reproduce Goldsmith's description of the village school-master. Who was the original of this portrait?

Ans. See Substance.

It has been pointed out in the introduction that *Paddy Byrne who kept a school at Lissoy which the poet attended in his boyhood* was the original of the village school-master as drawn by the poet here.

Q. 3. Explain fully the following passages :—

- \*(a) *Remote from towns.....to rise.*
- (b) *His house was known.....pain.*
- (c) *The ruined.....allowed.*

- (d) *The broken soldier.....were won.*  
 \*(e) *Pleased with.....ere charity began.*  
 \*(f) *Thus to relieve.....for all.*  
 \*(g) *As a bird.....led the way.*  
 (h) *At his control.....,whispered praise.*  
 \*(i) *Truth from his lips.....to pray.*  
 \*(j) *To them his heart.....rest in Heaven.*  
 (k) *As some tall cliff.....its head.*  
 (l) *A man severe.....frown'd.*  
 (m) *In arguing, too.....still.*  
 (n) *While words of learned length.....all he knew.*

*Ans.* See Explanations of these passages in our notes.

Q. 4. Write short explanatory notes on :—

- (a) Passing rich with forty pounds a year.  
 (b) By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour.  
 (c) The long-remembered beggar was his guest.  
 (d) The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud.  
 (e) Talked the night away, wept o'er his wounds.  
 (f) Shouldered his crutch.  
 (g) Brighter worlds.  
 (h) A parent's warmth expressed.  
 (i) Straggling fence.  
 (j) Stern to view.  
 (k) The boding tremblers.  
 (l) To trace the day's disasters in his morning face.  
 (m) Cipher, measure, and presage terms and tides.

(n) Words of learned length and thundering sound.

(o) One small head.

(p) Where many a time he triumph'd.

*Ans.* See *Notes*.

Q. 5. (a) Distinguish between 'pity,' and 'charity' in the line "His pity gave ere charity began "

(b) and develop fully the comparison of the village preacher to a tall cliff.

*Ans.* See *notes*.

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# William Wordsworth (1770--1850)

**Life of Wordsworth.**—William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, and was educated at Hawkshead Grammar School (Lancashire) and at St. John's College, Cambridge. He appears to have been a moody child and bookish youth. He visited France in 1790, and in 1791-92, and enthusiastically upheld the French Revolution. A legacy (£900 from his friend, Raisley Calvert), the post of distributor of stamps for Westmoreland (1813-42), a Civil List pension (1842), and the Poet Laureateship (1843-50) enabled Wordsworth to live a long, quiet, meditative life, the only 'events' being several visits to Scotland and the Continent, and the publication of his books. With his talented and devoted sister, Dorothy Wordsworth, he settled at Grasmere, 1799; in 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson (his 'Phantom of Delight'); from 1813 till death he lived at Rydal Mount. From the start Wordsworth dedicated his life to poetry; *Descriptive Sketches* and *Evening Walk* (1793) appeared when he was only twenty-three; *the Borderers*, a tiresome tragedy followed in 1795; then came *Lyrical Ballads*, written in conjunction with his new friend Coleridge, in 1798; two volumes of miscellaneous verse (including 'Intimations of Immortality,' 'Sonnet to Liberty,' and other masterpieces) in 1807; *the Excursion* in 1814 and then *the Recluse*; *White Doe of Rylstone* in 1815; *Peter Bell* in 1819 and *the Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (published posthumously).

*Wordsworth, the chief of the Lake Poets and leader of the Second English Romantic Movement, made Nature—and Man as part of Nature—his great poetic theme. Poetic diction he banned; the poet, he held, should prefer the language of peasants and of the common people. Poetry he defined as 'emotion recollected in tranquillity.' Few poets have produced such perfect gems; perhaps no great poet has fallen to such depths of banality. He succeeded best when he forgot his theories. Wordsworth is pre-eminently the poet of the contemplative love of nature.*

### A Chronology of the Important Poems of Wordsworth.

1791-4—*Guilt and Sorrow.*

1792—*Evening walk.*

1795-6—*The Borderers and the Ruined Cottage.*

1797—*Reverie of Poor Susan.*

1798—*Lyrical Ballads, Lucy Gray, Ruth, The Poet's Epitaph, Nutting.*

1802—*London, 1802.*

1802-3—*Westminster Bridge, It is a Beauteous Evening, The Highland Girl, The Solitary Reaper.*

1805—*The Prelude* (though it was begun as early as 1795).

1816—*Laodamia, Dion.*

1820-25—*A Series of Sonnets on the River Duddon ; Within King's College Chapel ; To the Skylark ; A Morning Exercise ; Scorn not the Sonnet ; Critic ; The Primrose of the Rock ; Calm is the Fragrant Air ; By the Sea-shore, etc.*

**A Critical Estimate of Wordsworth's Poetry.** The first thing that strikes us when we read the poems of Wordsworth is his passionate love for Nature. Wordsworth is essentially the poet-priest of Nature. In England nature had been much neglected in the beginning of the 18th century. To poets of the artificial school of Pope, Nature is a convenient store-house of conventional images; and their descriptions of Nature are hackneyed and artificial. They regarded man as the proper subject of their study; Nature came only as a back-ground or subordinate. Even poets like Gray and Cowper with all their love for Nature could not wholly free themselves from this bondage of artificiality and conventionality.

But with Wordsworth all this is reversed. In his poetry Nature comes first and Man second, subordinated to Nature. Moreover he found the inner life of Nature which other poets failed to find. An able critic, Stopford Brooke, thus summarises Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature :—

S. P.—10.



"Wordsworth's view of Nature was entirely different from that which up to his time the poets had held. *Wordsworth said that Nature was alive. It had, he thought, one living soul, which, entering into flower, stream or mountain, gave them each their own life. Between this spirit in Nature and the mind of Man there was a pre-arranged harmony* which enabled Nature to communicate its own thoughts to man, and Man to reflect upon them, until an absolute union between them was established. This idea made him the first who *loved Nature with a personal love*, for she, being living and personal, and not only his reflection, was made capable of being loved as a man loves a woman. He could brood on her character, her ways, her words, her life, as he did on those of his wife or sister. Hence arose his minute and loving observation of her and his passionate description of all her life *This was his natural philosophy, and bound up as it was with the idea of God as the thought which pervaded and made the world, it rose into a philosophy of God and Nature, and Man.*"

We may well illustrate the truth of the above remarks by referring to only one poem of Wordsworth—*Lines written in Early Spring* which embodies the essence of the poet's view of Nature. That there is a pre-arranged harmony between Man and Nature is illustrated by the following lines :—

"To her fair works did Nature link  
The human soul that through me ran etc."

Again :—"If this belief from Heaven be sent,  
If such is Nature's holy plan etc."

As an illustration of Wordsworth's belief that Nature is alive and the objects of Nature are capable of feeling pleasure and pain like human beings we may quote the following lines :—

"And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes ;"

And again :—

"And I must think do all I can  
That there was pleasure there."

*But Wordsworth's view of Nature was but limited. He held that all Nature is happy, and shut his eyes to the cruel injustice that exists in Nature too. The Nature that*

(b) His optimism Wordsworth knew was the lovely Nature of the English Lakes which was bound to make his view of her thoroughly optimistic. The burning sirocco blowing through skeleton-strewn deserts, the tiger's cruel beauty, the death-rattle of the snakes,—all these, Wordsworth ignored. It is for Tenyson, and not for Wordsworth, to sing of Nature 'red in tooth and claw'; though there are two or three poems of Wordsworth such as the *Red-breast chasing a Butterfly* and *Ruth or the Influence of Nature* which would go to show that Wordsworth knew that even Nature in some places can exert an evil influence upon the mind of man

Another distinguishing feature of Wordsworth's poetry is *his deep sympathy for man as man*. An example of this is to be

(c) Sympathy for man as man. found in *The Solitary Reaper* where his whole soul is stirred to its depths by "hearing a Highland lass singing in a harvest field." In *The Affliction of Margaret*, too, his deep sympathy for man enabled him to delineate so vividly a mother's longing for a lost son. He constantly thinks of the griefs and miseries of his fellow-creatures. Even the loveliness of Nature cannot shut his eyes to these; he sits amid the budding loveliness of Spring, and the only thought that rises in his mind to disturb his happiness is the thought of man,—“what man has made of man.”

Then again the poet has sympathy for dumb animals. His love for man is closely connected with his tenderness for animal life. He has sympathy and reverence

(d) Sympathy for dumb animals. for bird-life too. This trait of his character is well-illustrated by poems like the *Sparrow's Nest* and *Hart leap Well*.

His poetry is marked by *purity and simplicity of style, austere and vivid naturalness*; high *seriousness and sanity, uncompromising morality* and last, but not least, by the use of

(e) Other characteristics of his poetry. *vivid and suggestive imagery*. Wordsworth's similes and metaphors are often bursts of beauty, and highly suggestive. How much poetry and imagination is there in a single simile—

“Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.”

What a glorious presentation of the lofty detachment and noble influence of Milton!

Notice again how beautifully Wordsworth introduces comparison after comparison to illustrate the suddenness and unexpectedness of the sweet strains of the solitary reaper. To take one more example :—What poet but Wordsworth could have used the following exquisitely beautiful and suggestive simile to describe his beloved Lucy :—

"A violet by a mossy stone,  
Half-hidden from the eye,  
Fair as a star when only one,  
Is shining in the sky."

**Wordsworth as a Sonneteer.** Wordsworth's sonnets are things of beauty, exquisite in their very spontaneity. Milton was his model in sonnet-writing, and *like Milton, Wordsworth expressed in his sonnets not the feeling of love, but he expressed the thoughts and sentiments which were roused in his mind either by his country or by some beautiful object of Nature.* His sonnets, again, are free from the tendency to prolixity and diffuseness which often mars the beauty of his longer poems. "His sonnet," says Hutton, "never goes off as it were, 'with a clap or repercussion at the close; but is thrown up like a rocket, breaks into light and falls into a soft shower of brightness."

The sonnets of Wordsworth must be regarded as *natural* and *spontaneous*. His sonnets to Liberty show how deeply the poet had felt what it is that constitutes the greatness of nations. No poet more unhesitatingly disdained unrighteous empires; or kept the influences of moral forces more steadfastly in view. If there is any poet who has excelled Wordsworth in patriotic condemnation of sham and hypocrisy, or in the art of sonnet-writing, it is Milton and Milton alone. Other poets wrote other sonnets, but they could never surpass Wordsworth in majestic beauty.

**Wordsworth as an advocate of Liberty—His patriotism :—**

*The dominant note running through all the political poems of Wordsworth is his ethical conviction that by the soul only the*

*nation shall be great and free. No poet of the 19th century is more trumpet-tongued than Wordsworth when he speaks of liberty. What Wordsworth understands by liberty is orderly, constitutional liberty—not lawless licence and revolutionary fury. For a time he dreamt of finding true liberty in revolutionary France; but even in his revolutionary youth, liberty had never meant with him a revolt against law. It rather implied a lofty and willing fidelity to it. His Happy Warrior not only has a sense and faculty for storm and turbulence, but through the heat of conflict keeps the law in calmness made, and sees what he foresaw. "Rapine, avarice, expense" and tyrannic aggression, such as materialism and militarism—were regarded by the poet as equally alien to true liberty.*

Wordsworth firmly believes that the influence of Nature ennobles men and nations, and next to Nature the influence of great men like Milton. *The idea that a nation is made great by its inner worth and not by the accumulation of wealth, etc., dominates the earliest group of Wordsworth's political sonnets composed under the immediate stimulus of Milton. Miltonic they are in their massive eloquence, in their blending of the ascetic and the heroic temper, in their prophetic vehemence, in their accessions of tenderness. He chides like a lover, and the bitter denunciations of the "Milton, thou should'st be living at this hour" are followed within a few days by the lofty apology "When I have borne in memory what has tamed Great Nations," and the magnificent praise "It is not to be thought of that the flood of British freedom."*

*Hatred of aggressive militarism led Wordsworth to regard Napoleon as the great tyrant of Europe, and he could not but sympathise with countries that suffered from the blows of this tyrant. He had deep reverence for what was great and grand in ancient times, and it is with this mingled feeling of sympathy, respect and reverence, that Wordsworth speaks of the downfall of the Venetian Republic. The same sympathy and reverence mingled with an earnest prayer to the spirit of Liberty is felt in "England and Switzerland" where the poet laments for the loss of the Swiss Republic,—another victim to the incursions of the tyrant of Europe.*

Wordsworth continued to pour forth his heart in continuous stream of passionate war poetry till the year 1816 when this

noble stream dried up among the arid convolutions of the *Thanksgiving Ode*. After this the legal and dogmatic element of the poet's nature became more and more conspicuous as his poetic vigour declined.

**Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats compared as Poets of Nature** :—These three poets ardently loved Nature for her own sake, but each in his own peculiar way. Wordsworth regards Nature as both 'law and impulse,' to Shelley Nature is 'impulse' alone. Again for Wordsworth, Nature is one ; for Shelley, she is virtually many ; and out of this fundamental difference there arises another *viz*, that Shelley, in viewing Nature, perceives only the great and the magnificent things which appeal to his mind most. The cloud, the west wind and other grand objects of Nature find place in Shelley's poetry. Wordsworth, on the other hand, has the keenest sympathy for the homely and the common-place. Again, Shelley is never so accurate an observer of Nature as Wordsworth.

Keats, too, loves Nature for her own sake. But he fails to find any soul in Nature. It is the outward beauty of Nature that is so much observed and loved by him. He is the most sensuous of the English poets, and remains contented with Nature's physical beauty. Nature is never a symbol to him as she is to Wordsworth. One thing, however, he has in common with Wordsworth and Shelley,—he too believes that to seek for happiness man must turn to Nature.

## THERE WAS A BOY.

**Date of the Poem**—The poem was composed in 1798 in Germany, and published in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. The lines were later on incorporated in *the Prelude* (Book V).

**Central thought**—Wordsworth knew a boy, who died in childhood but whose memory was long associated with the cliffs and islands of Windermere. That boy would often stand alone at evening, 'beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake' (*i.e.*, the lake of Windermere), and through a device made by pressing together the palms of his hands and intertwining the fingers he blew mimic hootings to the owls and provoked them to respond. For a time nothing would be

heard but the screeches of the owls, and their prolonged echoes away among the distant hills; but as the owls would soon be tired of the game, an interval of silence would follow, and in that silence the boy would hear, with a shock of mild surprise, the distant thunder of the cataract or he might see, with a sense of awe, the still waters of the lake, in the dusk of evening, reflecting in their depths the rocks, the woods and the expanse of the sky. *The sense of wonder, awe or mystery into which Nature surprised the boy now and then was but the earliest step in the process of her education (the Education of Nature for the boy), and that is what the poem seeks to illustrate.*

**Critical Remarks.**—*It is one of Wordsworth's Nature-poems. It illustrates that stage in the process of Nature's education, when man is the pursued, and Nature is the pursuer. In the lines on Tintern Abbey—a poem in which Wordsworth traces the growth and development of his love for nature, he refers to it thus:—*

“ When like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever Nature led : *more like a man*  
*Flying from something that he dreads, than one*  
*Who sought the thing he loved.* ”

We see here how Nature begins to work on the mind of man. The boy has no idea of what Nature is, but there seems to exist a bond of unconscious love between him and Nature, for why does he otherwise frequent the lake of Windermere in the dusk of evening when the stars begin to gleam in the sky? All that he consciously cares for is the hooting of owls, which he provokes by his mimic cries, but Nature does intrude into his boyish sports. The silence that settles down upon the place when the owls have ceased to hoot carries into his heart the voice of mountain-torrents or the lake, reflecting in the depth of its still waters, the rocks, the woods and the misty sky, and claims his attention. And all that perception of the beauty and mystery of Nature comes to the boy with “ a gentle shock of mild surprise ”, and through such gentle shocks, repeated again and again, does Nature capture the heart of man, as it did Wordsworth's at any rate.

**Metre and Versification.**—*The poem is written in Blank Verse (i.e., verse without rhyme) in Iambic Pentameter.* It may be noticed that the lines have been run together into what is called a *Verse-paragraph*, the sense being carried on from line to line. By this means, and also by the variation of pauses the monotony, so incidental to regular and stop Blank Verse, has been avoided. Again it will be monotonous if it is written throughout in Iambic measure; so a trochaic foot has been substituted for an Iambic, *e.g.*,

Rising or setting, would he stand alone.

**Analysis.**—(1) There was a boy, now dead, whose memory is associated with the cliffs and islands of Windermere.

(II. 1—2)

(2) He would, at evening, stand alone beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake and blow mimic hootings to the owls.

(II. 2—11)

(3) The owls hoot in response, and the whole region would resound with echoes

(II. 11—15)

(4) In the interval of silence the boy would hear the voice of mountain-torrents or notice the lake "with all its solemn imagery."

(II. 15—24)

(5) The boy died early in childhood, and the poet, often passing by, would pause at his grave for half an hour.

(II. 25—33)

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

**Lines 1—11.** [The cliffs and islands of Windermere remind Wordsworth of a boy who, often at evening, would stand alone, beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake, and by mimicking the screeches of owls, would provoke them to respond.]

**Paraphrase**—There once lived a boy : you cannot forget him so early, Oh cliffs and islands of Windermere ! Often at evening, when the stars, whether rising or setting, first appeared in the sky and seemed to guide on along the summits of the hills, he would stand alone beneath the trees or by the lake gleaming faintly in the twilight, and there, he mimicked the hootings of owls by blowing through the palms of his hands clasped together, with fingers intertwined, as one might blow through a musical instrument, and so provoked the owls to respond.

*There...Boy*—The poet does not tell us anything more about the boy than that he once lived in the neighbourhood of the lake Windermere. We may only suppose that he was a school-companion of Wordsworth at Hawkshead, and that if he deserved particular notice from Wordsworth, it was because Nature so early claimed the boy as her own, and took charge of his education. (Cf.—Lucy.) The poem, as we have pointed out, illustrates the earliest stage in the process of Nature's education for man. *Ye.....well*—The cliffs and islands of Windermere were the favourite haunts of the boy. *Winander*—the lake Windermere, the largest lake in England, lying on the borders of Westmoreland and Lancashire. De Quincey describes it as a shy pastoral recess, "not garishly in the world's eyes, but lurking half-unknown to the traveller of that day." *Many a time*—often. *Earliest stars*—the stars first to appear in the evening sky. *Began.....hills*—Wordsworth means that the stars appeared above the horizon. *Move along*—explained by 'rising or setting' in the next line. Perhaps the idea is that some of the stars were coming into view, and others were dropping out. *The edges of the hills*—refers to the line where the hills blend with the sky. *When.....hills*—It suggests a very quiet picture of evening. Against the background of the sky stand the hills, and over the edges of the hills gleam the stars, some glowing in a bright blaze, and some fading away. The whole landscape has the air of a solemn quiet, a hushed calm, ushering in the evening. *Rising or setting*—Some of the stars were coming into view, and others were dropping out. *Glimmering lake*—a lake faintly gleaming in the dusk of evening. The lake is Windermere. *Stand alone*—Notice how everything in the poem contributes to the effect that the poet desires to



be produced upon the boy. The shades of evening are just falling on the land ; the boy stands alone ; the loneliness of the place is disturbed for a time by the mimic hootings of the boy and the actual screeches of the owls, and there is silence again. The whole thing is contrived with a view to the effect. Love of solitude is one of the most permanent notes in W.'s poetry. *With fingers interwoven*—The boy will make a device by joining the palms together and intertwining the fingers. **N.B.** The poet himself says :—"This practice, of making an instrument of their own fingers is known to most boys, though some are more skillful at it than others. William Raincock of Rayrigg, a fine spirited lad, took the lead of all my school fellows in this art." *Pressed closely*—clasped fast. *Uplifted*—raised. *An instrument*—i.e., a musical instrument. e.g., a pipe. *Mimic hootings*—cries imitative of the hootings of owls. *Silent owls*—Here again is another touch (*silent*), suggesting the solemn quiet of the evening. The owls are provoked to answer by the mimic hootings of the boy, and so the spell of the scene is broken. *That*—so that. *Answer him*—respond to his mimic hootings. *They*—the owls.

**Lines 11-16.** [The owls would shout in response to the mimic hootings of the boy, and the whole region would resound with their prolonged echoes.]

**Paraphrase.**—And the owls would shout from the farther end of the valley, surrounding the lake, and repeat their cries, as the boy called out to them, and the mimic hootings of the boy and the cries of the owls would awaken echoes all around, prolonged far among the distant hills.—It was a perfect, *tira-lira-la* that they produced.

*Watery vale*—the valley surrounding Windermere. *Responsive to his call*—in answer to the mimic hootings of the boy. *Quivering peals*—the sound that came vibrating through the air ; the repeated cries ringing in the air. It is a very happy expression, suggesting the waves of sound that came one upon another. 'Quivering' means *thrilling* or *vibrating*. *Halloos*—evidently the mimic hootings of the boy. *Screams*—the cries of the owls. *Echoes...redoubled*—the prolonged echoes of the hootings of the owls among the distant hills. *Concourse wild*—tumultuous cries ; a confused mixture of sounds. *Jocund*—merry. *Din*—noise ; uproar. *With quivering peals.....jocund din*—

**N.B.** Wordsworth has been said to be *the poet of the ear*, just as Shelley is *the poet of the eye*, i.e.. Wordsworth appeals to the ear in his descriptive passages as Shelley to the eye. The present passage illustrates this.—Wordsworth loves to dwell on *sound*, as interpretative of a scene, rather than on *colour* which Shelley is so fond of describing. An example from each poet will make the thing clear. Just a few lines below in this poem we have the example of Wordsworth's fine ear for sound as when he says that a *gentle shock of mild surprise carries into the boy's heart the voice of mountain-torrents*. But Shelley, for example in his *Ode to the Skylark* is more concerned with colour effects than with the song of the bird, as when he says:—

"Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest :  
*Like a cloud of fire*  
The blue deep thou wingest."

**Lines 16-25.** [When an interval of silence followed and the boy could not provoke the owls to repeat their cries, then he would hear, with a thrill of surprise, the thunder of the cataract, or would see the shadowy lake reflecting in its still waters the rocks, the woods and the evening sky.]

**Paraphrase**—And when there followed an interval of silence, which the owls would not disturb by their cries however the boy might try to provoke them, then, as he waited patiently for the hootings of the owls to begin again, he would hear in that depth of silence, with a thrill of astonishment, the thundering of the cataracts ; or the whole scene, spread before his eyes would, unknowingly, occupy his attention—the lake with all that was reflected in the depth of its still waters, the rocks, the woods and the misty sky above.

**Pause**—interval of silence. **Baffled**—defied. 'Baffled' goes with *pause*, and not with *silence*. The pause on the part of the owls defied the best skill of the boy ; in other words, when the boy, try however he might, could not induce the owls to repeat their cries. *In that silence*—After all those "long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud," the silence must have been very impressive ; and to the silence the voice of the mountain torrents owed its solemnity. **Hung**—lay in a suspense ; waited

eagerly to hear the cries of the owls. *A gentle shock*—a thrill. *Mild surprise*—just a thrill of surprise. *Has....mountain-torrents*—has conveyed into his inmost heart the sound of the cataracts. Notice here that Wordsworth changes from a past tense to a present perfect tense; evidently he is relating an experience that is not unknown to many of the children of this day, and has, therefore, acquired the character of universality. *Mountain-torrents*—cataracts or water-falls. *And when there came.....mountain-torrents*—**Expl.** The boy, standing alone beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake of Windermere, blew mimic hootings to the owls, and the owls would respond across the length of the valley, and so the game would go on for some time. But soon the owls would come to a pause, and then try as he might, the boy could not make the owls repeat their cries. *It was then the moment for Nature to make her way into the heart of the boy.* In the depth of the silence that settled upon the scene the boy would, sometimes, hear, with a thrill of surprise, the thundering of the distant waterfalls, to which he had so long paid no heed. **N.B.** Here Nature comes unsought to the boy; and what is true of the boy was also true of the poet himself. As De Quincey says, "Wordsworth, like his companions, haunted the hills and the vales for the sake of angling, snaring birds, swimming, and sometimes of hunting, according to the Westmoreland fashion, on foot;.....It was in the course of these pursuits, by an indirect effect growing gradually upon him, that Wordsworth became a passionate lover of nature, at the time when the growth of his intellectual faculties made it possible that he should combine those thoughtful passions with the experience of the eye and the ear." *The visible scene*—the scene spread before his eyes. *Unawares*—unknowingly. *Would.....mind*—would take possession of his mind without his knowledge. *Solemn imagery*—the dim shapes and figures (of the dusky landscape), inspiring awe in the mind of the boy. *Uncertain heaven*—the vague misty sky; 'uncertain' because it is of no definite colour. *Steady lake*—'steady' refers to the still waters of the lake. *Bosom*—depth. *That uncertain heaven.....lake*—It is all the effect of the dusk and stillness of evening that the sky is vague and misty in its reflection on the surface of the lake. We have to note only these words—'solemn,' 'uncertain' and 'steady,' and they complete the picture; if any of these

words is omitted, the spell of the evening will be gone. This is a very striking passage of Wordsworth; of it Coleridge says, "I should have recognized it anywhere; and had I met these lines, running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out 'Wordsworth!'" *Or the visible scene.....* .....*steady lake*—**Expl.** While the owls ceased to respond to the mimic hootings of the boy, he might perhaps look at the scene before him, to which he had paid no heed so long. The dim and shadowy landscape, with all its familiar objects strangely transformed in the dusk of evening might then unknowingly take possession of his mind; the rocks, the woods, the vague sky, reflected in the still waters of the lake, might then first draw his attention. And while he looked at these things, he would be thrilled with a sense of wonder, awe or mystery, and thus unconsciously *his heart would be drawn to Nature.*

**Lines 26—34.** [The boy died ere he was twelve years old, and whenever Wordsworth passes by the churchyard where the boy lies buried, he has stood there half an hour, looking at the grave.]

**Paraphrase**—This boy early parted from his school-mates. He died in childhood before he attained the age of twelve. The valley where he was born and brought up is of surpassing beauty; the churchyard lies on an elevation, while the village-school stands immediately below it. And whenever I have passed through that churchyard on summer-evenings, I think I have stood there as long as a full half-hour, silently gazing at the grave where the boy lies.

*Was.....mates*—was snatched away (early by death) from his school-companions. *Pre-eminent*—surpassing. *Vale*—valley *Pre-eminent.....vale*—**N.B.** De Quincey describes it as "a new country, a country of romance and mystery, to which the thoughts are habitually turning. Children are fascinated and haunted with vague temptations, when standing on the frontiers of such a foreign land; and so was Wordsworth fascinated, so haunted. Fortunate for Wordsworth that, at an early age, he was transferred to a quiet nook of this lovely district. At the little town of Hawkshead, seated on the north-west angle of Esthwaite Water, a grammar-school (which, in

English usage means a school for classical literature) was founded, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, by Archbishop Sandys..... Here it was that Wordsworth passed his life, from the age of nine until the time arrived for his removal to college". *Hangs*—As it stands on an elevation, it seems to be held up, suspended in the air. *Slope*—an elevation. *Above*.....*school*—the village-school of Hawkshead stands immediately below it. *When*.....*led*—when I have happened to pass. *On summer-evenings*—on summer evenings, the twilight stayed longer, and the landscape was bright and clear, and that is why Wordsworth paused half an hour over the grave of the boy. *A long half-hour*.....*stood*—We do not understand why Wordsworth should have encumbered this fine poem with prosaic details of this kind. Does he not weaken the effect of the poem by adding these few personal lines? It may seem to some that his love of truth often leads to such, and even graver absurdities, but the true lover of Wordsworth will see in these lines his fondness to dwell on a deep spiritual experience, and revive it in memory to feel once again its solemn ecstasy. *Mute*—speechless; silent. *Looking*.....*lies*—Of course we feel the pathos of Wordsworth's own sentiment, but the lines are perhaps out of place here.

### Questions and Answers.

1. *Why may this poem be said to be a Nature-poem? What does it seek to illustrate?*

See Critical Remarks and Notes.

2. *Give the central thought of the poem.*

See Central Thought.

3. *Wordsworth has been said to be the poet of the ear, as Shelley is the poet of the eye. Discuss and illustrate.*

See Notes.

4. *Explain with reference to the context:—*

(a) And, when there came a pause...mountain-torrents.

(b) Or the visible scene.....steady lake.

5. *Annotate the following :—*

Glimmering lake ; mimic hootings ; responsive to his call ;  
 quivering peals ; concourse wild ; gentle shock of mild  
 surprise ; solemn imagery ; uncertain heaven ; pre-  
 eminent in beauty.

## COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

1. **Date of Composition.**—According to the statement of Wordsworth himself the sonnet was composed on Westminster Bridge in London, on September 3rd, 1802, when he was on his way to France. From the fact, however, that Wordsworth was at Calais in August, and from the entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal which fixes the date on July 30, some editors prefer the latter date. *In the Oxford edition of Wordsworth's works the editor notes that the sonnet was composed on July 31, 1802, and published in 1807.*

2. **Occasion of the poem.**—The following entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal explains the occasion of the poem:—"July 30. Left London between five and six in the morning, outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city—St. Paul's with the river, a multitude of little boats—made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses, not overhung by their clouds of smoke, were spread out endlessly ; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles".

3. **Criticism**—"The picture (in the *Reverie of poor Susan*) is one of those which come home to many a country heart with one of those sudden 'revulsions into the natural' which philosophers assert to be the essence of human joy ; but noblest and best known of all these poems is the *Sonnet on Westminster Bridge* : 'Earth has not anything to show more fair' ; in which nature has asserted her dominion over the works of all the multitude of men ; and in the early clearness the poet beholds the great city—as Sterling imagined on his dying-bed—"not as full of noise and dust and confusion, but as something silent, grand and everlasting"—*F. W. Myers.*

"In Wordsworth's time London was not what it is to-day—a city of six million people, the most awful and the most gloomy of all cities in the world...London was then not more than a quarter of its present size; there were green fields and valleys all about it, which have long since disappeared under square miles of solid masonry. *I do not think that any mortal man could find objective beauty in London to-day, though he might find beauty of another kind. But in Wordsworth's day it was not impossible*, and one of his most famous short poems is a description of London as seen from Westminster Bridge"...The poem is "illustrative of Wordsworth's methods of finding beauty in simple and common things," and as such it "ought to interest the student in his lighter work" "It is a fine piece of composition, severely beautiful, and such as even Tennyson would not have been ashamed of."

**4. Metre and Versification.**—The poem is a sonnet of fourteen iambic pentameters, divided both in structure and sentiment into octave and sestet. The rhyme scheme is *abba abba cdcdcd*.

The lines are not normal iambic pentameters. (1) The first foot of the seventh line is a *trochee* substituted for an *iamb*. (2) The word 'theatres' is to be taken as consisting of two syllables, *thea tres*, and (3) the middle syllable of the word 'glittering' is to be slurred or suppressed. (4) The first foot of the ninth line also is a *trochee*. With these exceptions the lines will scan as regularly as possible.

**5. Central Thought.**—The silent grandeur and beauty of the city of London, as it appears bathed in the first rays of the rising sun, has something of the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles; and it cannot but influence profoundly the heart of a contemplative observer.

**6. Analysis.**—(a) The poet is deeply impressed with the beauty of the city of London. (l. 1)

(b) The sight is really majestic. (ll. 2—3)

(c) The atmosphere being free from smoke, the beauty of the morning clothes the city in unusual splendour. (ll. 4—8)

(d) The poet compares the sight with images of other similar scenes preserved in his memory, in points of :

- (i) splendour of the morning sun (ll. 9—10)  
and (ii) profound silence (ll. 11—12)

(e) The strong contrast between the city in its silence and the same city in the course of the day when the inhabitants are awake fills him with wonder. (ll. 13—14)

7. **Substance.**—The sight of London in the silence of the early morning, as contrasted with the poet's experience of the city at other times of the day, profoundly moves his heart with emotions of admiration and adoration. Men have not yet come out of their abodes. Chimneys of mills and factories have not yet begun to spread smoke in the atmosphere. The sky is, in consequence, clear and free from any impurity or stain. The outlying green fields are conspicuous to the observer's eye. Ships, towers, domes, theatres, temples, lie exposed to view, and appear picturesque being set against the background of the green fields, which are also fully visible. The gorgeous rays of the rising sun have clothed the whole scene as it were in a garment. The river Thames flows freely in its course, for there is not yet any disturbance due to river traffic. The profound silence of the city at this time provokes in the observer's mind a strong contrast with its din and bustle throughout the rest of the day.

8. **Paraphrase.**—No other scene on the earth, living in the memory of the poet, can compare with the early morning scene of the city of London in point of beauty and solemn grandeur. The glorious view of the city, in its silent grandeur of the morning, is sure to arrest the attention of any observer who has not yet lost all his sensibility. The rays of the sun in the early morning have spread over all parts of the city, exposed to the observer's eye, in a continuous stretch. There is no smoke, no mist, no rain to obstruct the view of the ships in the river with their high masts, the towers with their pinnacles pointing towards the clear sky, the domes of observatories and other buildings, the high tops of theatres and churches, all shining in the light of the sun and set against the background of the outlying fields. No other scene in nature, no valley, rock, or hill



appeared to the poet so grand and beautiful with the vesture of early sunshine. So profound a silence never struck the heart and mind of the poet. The great river Thames now flows slowly and silently in its course without any disturbance being caused by the traffic of boats, steamers, and ships. The deep silence that reigns over the vast city seems to suggest that even the houses enjoy undisturbed sleep in order to recover their energy for the work of the day. London, the metropolis of a vast kingdom and empire, the great centre of world-commerce and traffic, appears to suspend all operations at this early part of the day. When moved by so splendid a sight, a pious heart cannot but be put in mind of God, the inexhaustible source of infinite beauty and grandeur.

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

*Earth has not etc.*—For a poet like Wordsworth, whose intense love of nature made him discover grace and beauty, in a thousand scenes on earth, this statement may appear to be exaggerated and hyperbolic. The reader, however, will have no room to doubt the sincerity of the poet's emotion when he remembers that his mind was raised to an ecstasy of wonder and admiration by a feeling of striking contrast between his experience of the city with its din and bustle of traffic and business during the day-time, and the present state of profound tranquillity which was reigning over the same city in the early part of the day.

*To show*—to present to our view. *Fair*—beautiful. *Dull*—devoid of feeling or sensibility.

*Of soul*—in his heart.

**N. B.**—In the language of poetry—at least of English poetry,—the *heart* is the seat of the *soul* and the source from which all affections and emotions take their rise. It is to be distinguished from *mind* which is the seat of reason and intellect. This meaning of *soul* derives from the use of the word in the Old Testament, where it is understood as the seat of affections, sensations and passions as well as an entity capable of intercourse with God.

*Pass by*—leave unnoticed. *Sight*—scene (of comparatively temporary duration). *Touching*—striking ; moving strong emotions like wonder and admiration. *In*—by virtue or force of. *Majesty*—glory and grandeur.

*Dull...majesty*—**Expl.** Wordsworth becomes powerfully impressed with the beauty and grandeur of the city of London at the early part of the morning when the whole city, with all its greater and smaller buildings, appears to be sunk in the profound silence of undisturbed sleep. The perfect calm and serene smokeless atmosphere reigning over the city at the early part of the morning are in a striking contrast to the din and bustle, dust and smoke, which make the city at an advanced part of the day ugly and oppressive to imagination. If in the presence of such a magnificent scene, a man is not moved to wonder and admiration, he must be callous and insensible to all impressions of beauty, and grandeur.

*This city*—The poem was composed by Wordsworth on the morning of July 31, 1802, on the Westminster Bridge, and not written from memory afterwards. Hence the graphic touch of 'this.' *Now*—in this part of the day.

**N. B.**—The poet has evidently in his mind a consciousness of the striking contrast between the aspect of the city in morning and the same in the working period of the day. In the sight of the city at morning, the poet recognises how "nature has reasserted her dominion over the works of all the multitude of men."

*Like a garment*—like a holiday dress.

**N. B.**—This expression suggests the idea of sacredness by power of association. This use of the word 'garment' occurs in the Bible in various places of Psalm, civ. 1—2: "O Lord my God...Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment."

*Wear*—put on. *Beauty*—glory and freshness.

*This city...morning*—**Expl.** Strongly impressed by the rare silence and beauty of the city of London in the early part of the morning, the poet is filled with the sentiment of reverential admiration. The view of the city has completely taken possession of his imagination and reason. The whole city is bathed in the brilliant soft rays of the morning sun, and presents itself

to the poet's mind, not in its aspect of a man-made town, but as part of the country which Nature or God made.

His impression and emotion of wonder and adoration grow hundredfold stronger as he re-calls in his mind the deafening noise and bustle of traffic on land and water in the same city, overhung with particles of dust, soot and smoke during the working part of the day.

*Silent*—The noise and bustle of traffic on land and water, the busy hum of men in offices and market-places, schools and factories have not yet started for the day, and the inmates of the ships, towers, etc., are all asleep. This eloquent silence makes a strong appeal to the poet's heart. *Bare*—as the poet himself adds, "open unto the fields, and to the sky:" exposed to view in their entirety, because *not yet overclouded by smoke and dust and soot* arising from the chimneys and fire-places, when during the busy part of the day the factories, railways, steam-ships, private hearths are worked by men. "*The adjective 'bare' refers to the clear appearance of objects seen in the morning atmosphere, they appear without any mists, sharp and clear of outline. Such clear air is never seen in London to-day.*"

—Prof. Hearn.

**N. B.**—*Note that the London of Wordsworth's time was free from smoke and dust at least in the morning; but this is not the case with London to-day.*

*Ships*—now lying at anchor on the river Thames, with the sailors asleep on the deck or in the cabins. By 'ships' the poet indicates the boats and steamers as well. *Towers*—lofty narrow buildings of round, square, or polygonal forms, either independent or forming parts of churches, castles, or other edifices. *Domes*—large cupolas; hemi-spherical roofs of buildings, like monuments or observatories. *Theatres*—places of public entertainment, containing stages and audience seats, with high conspicuous tops pointing to the sky.

**N. B.**—In speaking of 'theatres' and 'temples' the poet appears to strike a false note owing to inadvertence caused by the over-powering emotion of the moment. The grandeur of the morning scene unconsciously transfers his imagination to the cities of classical antiquity, conspicuous by their public baths, theatres and temples.

*Temples*—By this word Wordsworth means to refer to such places of public worship as the St. Paul's Cathedral, the Westminster Abbey, etc. *Open*—fully exposed. *Unto the fields*—because there is neither rain, nor mist, nor smoke to come between the lofty structures of houses in the city and the outlying fields.

**N. B.**—"Architecturally, Westminster Bridge is now much more beautiful than it was in Wordsworth's day; the modern structure is of steel and stone, and is made to harmonise in style with the splendid Houses of Parliament which are situated immediately next to the bridge. Yet notwithstanding the magnificence of the neighbouring structure, to-day all the neighbourhood of Westminster Bridge has a dark and gloomy aspect, caused by the heavy atmosphere and smoke of London. As for green fields, you would now have to take a railroad train to reach them from Westminster Bridge—or at least a steamer—for they are very far away."—*Prof. Hearn*.

*All*—may be taken either as an indefinite pronoun or adverb meaning 'altogether.' *Bright and glittering*—shining and glistening in the soft splendid rays of the morning sun. *Smokeless air*—clear morning atmosphere, the smoke from chimneys and fire-places having not appeared as yet. *Never*—For the apparent hyperbole compare *notes* on line 1, above. *Steep*—infuse; bathe. *First splendour*—glory of the sunrise.

*Never did sun.....hill*—**Expl.** Wordsworth was an ardent lover and worshipper of nature. As such, he had noted the magic beauty of the rays of the early morning sun on various natural objects,—valley, rock as on hill. He was by habit and choice a dweller in country places, and would be especially attracted by the imposing and tranquil aspects of hills, lakes, and dales. Yet, in comparison with other similar scenes the wonderful beauty and grandeur of the city of London, invested with the serene rays of the glorious morning sun, appeared to him rare and unique in Nature. This was certainly due to some extent to the feeling of contrast between the city in the busy period of the day and the same city in its silent beauty in the early morning.

*Saw*—perceived. *Felt*—experienced in my heart.

**N. B.**—The poet here is conscious of the distinction, which ordinarily we omit to consider, between *seeing* and *feeling*. A

man may see a thing without its giving rise to a corresponding quality or degree of emotion.

*Calm*—tranquillity. *Deep*—profound ; spirit-stirring. *The River*—the Thames on which the city of London stands. "The Thames at Westminster is now confined between high embankments of stone, and it is not at all beautiful, but very dirty and black. Reading this poem only enables us to imagine what the scene may have been like a hundred years ago (when Wordsworth wrote this poem)."—*Prof. Hearn*.

*Glideth*—flows along its channel in a leisurely fashion, i.e., slowly. *His*—The river Thames is represented in British myth as a male person. [Cf.—The Sanskrit and modern Indian use of the names of rivers like *Sindhu* (Indus) and *Brahmaputra*.] *Sweet will*—unrestricted freedom of movement.

*Ne'er saw I...sweet will*—**Expl.** After describing the majestic beauty of the city of London in the splendid sunshine of the clear morning, the poet feels his attention arrested by the uncommon silence of the city of London in the early morning. In the background of his memory a picture of the busy commercial city of London in the day time (with its incessant noise and bustle of traffic) haunts his imagination, and by contrast the silence of the scene in the morning becomes indefinitely intensified. So the poet speaks of his sense of the profound tranquillity in the highest kind of superlative. To an observer of the city of London in the busy part of the day, the wonder of wonders is the perfect ease and leisure with which the waters of the Thames are flowing along the river-bed in the morning ; for throughout the day and a part of night, the waters of the river are turned turbid, muddy, and agitated by the constant traffic of ships, boats, and steamers on it ; whereas now in the early morning the river is free from all such disturbing influence.

*Dear God !.....lying still*—**Expl** The perfect tranquillity of the scene invests the particular objects, such as the houses, ships, domes, towers, etc., and even the river, with personal qualities, and all such things appear to enjoy the sweet pleasures of undisturbed sleep.

This tendency to personification gives rise to a metaphorical conception of the city of London, which, as the centre of the commercial world and as the capital of the vast British empire, is compared to the heart of a giant.

*Dear God !*—"The poet's sudden exclamation of delight—"Dear God"—conveys his own emotion to any person reading the poem." The exclamation in the mouth of a man for whom Nature and God were almost one and the same cannot be regarded as out of place. [*Cf* —Wordsworth's exclamation "Great God !" in the sonnet *The world is too much with us.*] *The very houses*—the houses considered in themselves (without any reference to their inmates whose sleep is not difficult to conceive or imagine). *Mighty heart*—London is the greatest centre of commerce and government in the vast British empire. The metaphor here seems to compare the British Empire to a giant and its great metropolis, the city of London, to the heart of that giant. Just as the heart is the central organ of blood circulation which is an essential condition of life, so the city of London is the centre or source from where flow the wealth, prosperity, ideas and opinions through all the parts of the British Empire.

## ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC.

1. **Date and Occasion.**—The poem was composed in August, 1802, and first published in 1807. It was occasioned by the transfer of Venice to Austria in 1797 by Napoleon in accordance with the Treaty of Campo Formio.

2. **History of the Republic of Venice.**—After the fall of Rome in 452 A.D., certain Roman families fled from their home and took shelter among the small islands at the head of the Adriatic. Here they laid the foundation of Venice. In course of time, Venice became a great European power both because she was the strongest maritime nation and because she was the great emporium of trade between the East (Asia) and the West (Europe). Venice defeated the Turks and the Moors in the famous battle of Lepanto, 1571, and saved Europe from the Ottoman Power (*i.e.*, the Turks). After the discovery of America and the Passage round the Cape of Good Hope, her naval power and importance gradually declined. In 1797,

Venice was finally crushed by Napoleon, and transferred to Austria by the Treaty of Campo Formio.

3. **Critical Estimate.**—The sonnet is inspired by Wordsworth's admiration for the past glory of Venice and sympathy with her in her present state of degradation. *His broad sympathy*, and *his ardent love of liberty*, have also been vividly brought out in this sonnet. It touches the chords of our hearts, and so powerfully has Wordsworth described the glory of Venice that the past becomes a living reality to us. The contrast between the former glory and the present downfall of Venice is very effective.

4. **Metre.**—Iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme is as follows :—*abba, cd cd cd*.

5. **Gist.**—Wordsworth first refers to the glory and greatness of Venice in the Middle Ages when she enjoyed her full freedom. Then he laments the gradual decay of this glory of Venice, and its final disappearance when Napoleon, the tyrant of Europe, handed her over to Austria.

6. **Substance.**—In this sonnet, Wordsworth speaks of the origin, glory and subsequent downfall of Venice. In the Middle Ages, Venice was the greatest of the maritime powers and saved Europe from the clutches of the Turks and the Moors. She was the eldest child of Liberty, and she maintained her love of independence throughout her career. She shone in the fulness of her freedom like a virgin, and never bowed to any foreign power. When she wished to exert her supremacy, she did so by extending her dominion over the sea. Such a glorious city has now fallen a prey to the greed and ambition of Napoleon. No doubt, Venice had long ceased to be a glorious republic, but Napoleon gave her the death-blow ; and it is but fit that we should mourn for the glory that Venice once had.

7. **Paraphrase.**—In the Middle Ages Venice rose to be the supreme power in Europe. Once she commanded the vast trade of the East, and defended Europe against the aggressions of the Turks. The glory of Venice was not unbecoming of her noble birth, for she was the first of the modern republics. Like a virgin, bright and free, Venice shone in the fulness of her freedom. She was never mated (*i.e.*, subordinated) to any foreign power. Neither guile (*i.e.*, treachery) nor open force could

deprive Venice of her freedom ; and when Venice wished to exert her supremacy she did so not by conquering any earthly power, but by conquering the Eternal Sea whom she married annually (*i.e.*, exerted her supremacy over the sea).

It is true that long before her final overthrow by Napoleon she had ceased to be a glorious republic. It is true she could no longer claim to be the greatest of the European powers ; it is equally true that she had been reduced to a shadow of her former self. Yet we must honour the memory of her greatness by paying her a last tribute when she is going to lose her freedom for ever. We are all frail human beings ; and therefore, the fall of a great power like Venice should call forth all our sympathy ; it should not excite our contempt. We must mourn for the loss of the shadow of Venice though the substance disappeared long ago.

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

#### Lines 1—8

**Substance**—[*In the octave (i.e., first 8 lines) Wordsworth speaks of the origin, glory, and power of Venice. She was the greatest power in Europe in the Middle Ages*]

*Once—i.e.*, in the Middle Ages when Venice was in the height of her glory.

*Did she.....see*—The **allusion** is to the fact that in the Middle Ages Venice became the greatest of the European powers by virtue of her position. She was the centre of trade communication between the East (*i.e.*, Asia) and the West (*i.e.*, Europe) by which she was the mistress of the East, and she by her naval supremacy ruled an eastern empire (consisting of portions of Greece, Thessaly, Asia Minor, *etc.*) and she crushed the power of the Turks.

*The gorgeous East*—the Eastern (*i.e.*, Asiatic) cities and countries which shone with their splendour and wealth. *Gorgeous* is a proverbial epithet of the East on account of her fabled wealth. The phrase '*Gorgeous East*' occurs in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, II, 3, and in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour Lost*. *In fee*—in possession ;



or in complete ownership (*i.e.*, in fee simple, to use the language of English law. *To hold in fee* is a legal phrase, and denotes absolute possession and complete ownership). *Once.....fee*—in the Middle Ages, Venice was practically the mistress of the Eastern Empires.

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*The safeguard of the West*—for Venice saved Europe (*i.e.*, the West) from the clutches of the Turks and the Moors by successfully resisting their attacks. Owing to her naval power and great wealth, Venice took a prominent part in the Crusades and powerfully resisted the encroachments of the Turks whom she helped to defeat at Lepanto in 1571, and whom she defeated in the naval battles at Scio and in the Dardanelles a hundred years later. Byron in his *Childe Harold*, Canto IV. 14, calls Venice "Europe's bulwark against the Ottomite." *The West*—the western (European) powers.

*The worth of Venice.....birth*—**Expl.** Wordsworth says that Venice should defeat the Turks and achieve great glory was not at all a wonder, for she rose out of a great desire for freedom. Venice was founded by freedom-loving Roman families who fled from Rome when that city was invaded by Attila the Hun, and the Republic of Venice always maintained this spirit of independence. The later worth of Venice was not unbecoming of her glorious birth as the first (*i.e.*, earliest in origin) of the modern republics. The first of the modern republics, Venice remained the first not only in name and origin but in glorious liberty and political achievements as well. *Her birth*—See the origin of the Venetian Republic in our Introduction. She was founded by certain Roman families who were ardent lovers of freedom.

*The eldest child of Liberty*—The **allusion** is to the foundation of Venice in 452 A. D. (Read the History of the Venetian Republic in our Introduction). By the eldest child of Liberty, Wordsworth means "the first of the modern republics." *A maiden city*—*i.e.*, a city that had never been conquered; a city that has never been mated to any foreign power. *Cf.*—A "maiden fortress." *Bright and free*—prosperous and cheerful. The city of Venice was never conquered by any foreign power; she shone in her stainless freedom and glory like a virgin, pure and spotless, who had not yet submitted to the rule of a

husband. *Guile*—treachery of a foreign power, or treachery on the part of the inhabitants of the city. *Seduced*—tempted and captured. *Force*—sheer brute force. *Violate*—pollute her freedom and chastity

N.B.—*Seduce* and *violate* continue the idea of a maiden.

*She was a maiden.....violate*--**Expl.** A city, like a virgin, can be won either by seduction (treachery) or by brute force. Venice could be conquered by neither. She always maintained her purity and independence, and in the fulness of her freedom shone like a pure virgin of spotless character.

*Took unto herself a Mate*--i.e., (1) married; (2) conquered.

N.B.--The word *mate* carries a double sense. The idea is that Venice was not conquered by any power; on the other hand, she conquered the eternal sea, (for Venice was the chief naval power of Europe during the Middle Ages). *Must espouse*--espoused; married. *Must*--has been used here in the past tense. *She must espouse the ever-lasting Sea*--The allusion is to the ring dropping ceremony whereby the annual marriage of Venice with the Sea was performed. "Pope Alexander III. in return for the services rendered him by Venice in 1177 against the German Emperor, presented the Doge (Duke) Lioni with a ring, with which he told him to wed the Adriatic, that posterity might know that '*the sea was subject to Venice, as a bride is to her husband.*' This 'marriage' was celebrated annually, the ring being dropped into the sea at a great state ceremonial." This custom has been alluded to by many English poets--Cf. Byron, *Childe Harold*, IV, ii :

"The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord;  
And, annual marriage now no more renewed."

and Shelley *Euganean Hills* :

"Sun-girt City, thou hast been  
Ocean's child, and then his queen;  
Now is come a darker day."

*She was a maiden city.....Sea*--**Expl.** Referring to the glory and greatness of the Venetian Republic, Wordsworth says that the city of Venice was never conquered by a foreign power either by treachery or by open force. She remained spotless

and free like a maiden, and never liked the idea of being mated and subordinated to any earthly power. She (Venice) never acknowledged a superior; on the other hand, she conquered and married the everlasting Sea—a companion worthy of her own greatness. The plain meaning is that Venice extended her supremacy over the sea, and became the greatest of the naval powers of Europe in the Middle Ages. Thus she strengthened her position.

*The everlasting Sea*—the eternal and unchanged ocean. The 'ocean' is a power of Nature; that is why it remains always the same and does not decay like human powers.

N. B.—Tennyson in his *Passing of Arthur* calls the sea "the voice of days of old, and of days to be." Byron thus describes the ocean in his *Childe Harold*:

"Time writes no wrinkles on thine azure brow,  
Such as Creation's dawn beheld thou rollest now."

### Lines 9—14.

**Substance**—[*The poet now comes to the subject proper. The once glorious republic of Venice had been given a death-blow by Napoleon. Let us all mourn for her death.*]

*What if*—what does it matter if. Venice had long ago fallen from her lofty position, but that is no reason why the poet should not lament now over her final overthrow. *Seen those glories fade*—After the age of Elizabeth the glories of Venice, one by one, all expired. The opening of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope reduced her maritime supremacy, and she lost all her power and prestige in the 17th and 18th centuries.

*Glories*—i.e., her political and commercial greatness.

*Titles*—e.g., 'the Eldest Child of Liberty' and 'the safeguard of the West' etc.

*Vanish*—disappear. *That strength decay*—though Venice in her later days was no longer the strong naval power in Europe; though she was no longer the safeguard or the bulwark of Europe.

*Decay*—perish.

*Tribule of regret*—some tears or token of our sorrow for the extinction of the once-glorious republic of Venice. This sorrow of Wordsworth here takes the shape of a sonnet.

*Her long life*—Venice maintained her independence for over 1100 years. "The Republic under the Doges or Dukes dates from 697 to 1797; or 1100 years."

*Hath reached its final day*—has reached the day of her final overthrow by Napoleon.

*Its final day*—refers to the year 1797 when Venice was finally conquered by Napoleon, and transferred to Austria. "In 1797, the troops of Napoleon occupied Venice, and on October 17, he concluded the Treaty of Campo Formio with Austria, which extinguished the old Venetian Republic."

*Men are we*—Frail human beings we all are; so the fall of Venice should call forth our sympathy and not contempt.

N. B.—The above is a reminiscence of two lines of Terence (a Roman writer) which may be translated thus:—"I am a man, and nothing that concerns man do I deem a matter of indifference to me."

*Must grieve*—must express our sorrow. *Shade*—shadow (as opposed to the 'substance').

*Shade of that which once was great*—i.e., the Venetian Republic which in her later years had been reduced to the shadow of her former glory. But even this shadow has now passed away. The independence of Venice has been finally extinguished by Napoleon. So we must lament for this. *Is passed away*—is finally extinct; has departed for ever.

*Men are we.....away*—Expl. After speaking of the former glories of Venice, Wordsworth comes to speak of the final subjugation of the Venetian Republic by Napoleon in 1797. The poet here assigns the reason why he is mourning over the downfall of Venice. People might say that in later times Venice had nothing of her former glory. The poet admits all this: he admits that in later times Venice was no longer the once-glorious republic, the eldest child of liberty or the safeguard of the West, he admits that she was reduced to a shadow of her former self. Yet he cannot but grieve when he learns that even this shadow has become finally extinct. He says

that we are all frail human beings, and it is but natural on our part that we should be touched deeply and moved to tears to see even the last shreds of what was once so great disappear for ever. Wordsworth was a patriot with a tender heart and an ardent champion of Freedom and he was easily moved by the loss of freedom even on the part of the smallest of nations. Hence he finds in the extinction of the Venetian Republic a cause of deep sorrow.

### Questions and Answers

**N.B.**—More important questions have been marked with an asterisk.

#### INTRODUCTORY

Q. 1. State the main facts of Wordsworth's life, and discuss the merits and defects of Wordsworth's poetry.

*Ans.* See *Introduction*.

Q. 2. Compare Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, as poets of Nature. Illustrate your answer with suitable references to the poems you have read.

*Ans.* See *Introduction*.

Q. 3. Compare and contrast Milton and Wordsworth as sonneteers and write a critical appreciation of the Liberty sonnets of Wordsworth.

*Ans.* See *Introduction*.

#### ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

Q. 1. Trace the rise, glory and subsequent downfall of the Venetian Republic.

*Ans.* See *Introduction* to this poem.

\*Q. 2. Give in your own words the substance of the poem and write a critical appreciation of it.

Ans. See *Introduction* to this poem.

Q. 3. Explain fully the following passages :—

\*(a) *She was a maiden city.....everlasting Sea.*

(b) *Men are we.....passed away.*

Ans. See *Notes*.

Q. 4. Write notes on :—The gorgeous East ; the safeguard of the West ; the eldest child of Liberty ; must espouse the everlasting Sea ; her long life ; final day.

## THE DAFFODILS.

1. **Date and Occasion.**—*This poem was composed in 1804, and published in 1807.* In his sauntering walks here and there in a meditative mood, Wordsworth once came suddenly upon an extensive bank of daffodils by the side of a lake. The contrast between the blue of the lake and the yellow of the bank of flowers was vivid and intense, and the poet could not forget it. He preserved his experience in these beautiful lines.

2. **Criticism.**—Wordsworth has a number of poems on the subject of flowers, such as the present one referring to the *Daffodils*, one to the *Small Celandine*, another to the *Daisy*, a third to the *Primrose of the Rock*, etc. All of them have a peculiar aroma due to the poet's manner of approaching them. "*The subject is a single impression.....there is hardly any movement at all.....it is 'an emotion recollected in tranquillity,' if it is not always a tranquil emotion.*" The tense is often in the past...as in *The Daffodils*, *The Solitary Reaper*, where indeed, for once (at the conclusion), the full passion of the hour (past) is magically revived.....usually the edge is taken off the feeling, which in recompense, is shown to us clear and rounded in the magic glass of the past.....*A sort of balance has to be struck between the original objects of memory—the girl or the daffodils—and their present value to the philosophic mind ; and such a process is somewhat retarding.*" ELTON.

*Coleridge finds another kind of fault with the poem, viz., want of harmony between the elaborate structure of the slowly moving thought of the poem and the rather slender though exquisite emotion resulting from it; the language, remarks Coleridge in effect, should be attuned to some far higher and more far-reaching memory than even that exquisite one of a dancing field of flowers. In extenuation of this fault, Mr. Elton observes: "But this fault proceeds from an excess, not a defect, of force, or rather from a temporary misapplication of force and a failure in the sense of proportion; which we can connect, if we like, with Wordsworth's inordinate sense of the importance of everything, great or small, that have happened to himself: a sense which is woven up with his high grave assurance of his mission, but also with his want of humour, which is itself 'beyond all human estimate'."*

"The subject of flowers", says Prof. Hearn, on the other hand "is so much treated in English poetry that, before Wordsworth's time, it had been almost worn threadbare—that is to say, became almost tiresome, and apparently exhausted. But this threadbare subject under Wordsworth's touch magically regains all its ancient freshness. There is nothing philosophical, novel or artificial in the following verses; everything said there has been said before, and never in a more simple way—yet how *the little picture burns itself into the memory with all the colours of the bright day described!*"

**3. Central thought.**—The beautiful and striking scenes and sounds of Nature, when vividly remembered, become a source of intense joy to the observer at times of melancholy and existence.

**4. Metre and Versification.**—The poem consists of four solitary stanzas, each containing six lines of iambic tetrameter.

In the sixth line the word 'fluttering' is to be taken as two syllables forming a trochaic substitution in the place of an iambic foot. 'Continuous' in the seventh line is to be pronounced as three syllables. The structure of the twelfth verse is similar to that of the sixth. The word 'poet' in verse fifteen is a dissyllabic one. 'Little' in the seventeenth verse is also to be regarded as consisting of two syllables. The remaining verses are all normal.

**5. Analysis.**—(1) When wandering aimlessly one day, the poet suddenly comes upon a field of daffodils by the side of a lake. (St. 1)

(2) The host of daffodils swaying in the breeze reminds the poet of the Milky Way (a collection of stars) in the sky. (St. 2)

(3) His melancholy is gone, and absorbed in the enjoyment of the scenery for the present, the poet is quite unconscious of the future and permanent delight which awaits him. (St. 3)

(4) The memory of that sight of the daffodils often proves a source of joy and delight to the poet when he is alone and his mind is a victim to melancholy. (St. 4)

**6. Substance**—Once wandering in a vacant mood, Wordsworth suddenly came across a field of daffodils dancing in the breeze. He forgot his oppression of mind and gave himself up freely to the enjoyment of the delight of the hour. He also carried in his memory the merry scene which always afforded him pleasure, when he was alone and stood in need of it. In the words of Prof. Hearn, the poet "felt more than common pleasure in the sight of the yellow flowers (daffodils) swaying in the summer breeze beside the sunlit water; and afterwards, whenever the picture returned to his memory, he felt the joy of the moment again—the happiness of the season, and of the sunlight and of the bright air, all of which seem to him expressed by the 'dancing' of the yellow flowers."

## 7. Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

**The Daffodils**—"The daffodil is a bright yellow flower, and a bed of daffodils in blossom really produces such a blaze of colour as would remind" an Indian of extensive fields cultivated with hemp (††) plants.

**St. 1. Substance**—[As the poet was roaming listlessly, with no definite purpose, here and there, he suddenly came across an extensive bank of daffodils in blossom. They were under the trees and by the side of the lake, swayed to and fro by the summer breeze.]

**Paraphrase**—The poet was one day walking listlessly. He was turning his glance upon one object and another but  
S. P.—12.



could find nothing to interest him or arrest his attention. At length, when he had taken a turn, he came, by some happy chance across an extensive field of bright yellow flowers, known as daffodils. The summer breeze swayed them to and fro. The daffodils bloomed under the shade of trees with green foliage, just by the margin of a lake of blue waters. The bright yellow of the flowers covered a very large area, and their gay movements struck the imagination of the poet with joy and pleasure.

*Wanuered*—roamed aimlessly here and there in search of nothing and yet of something. **N. B.**—The use of this verb prepares the ground for the surprise which overtakes the poet's imagination. The brilliant array of the daffodils met his sight quite unexpectedly. Consequently the strength of the emotion of joy and surprise was very great.

*Lonely as a cloud etc.*—**Expl.** The poet was listlessly roaming here and there like a piece of fleecy cloud sailing alone across the limitless blue of the sky. In the sky above, down on the earth below, there is nothing to serve as a companion to this lonely piece of cloud. It glides across the firmament, while looking down on the lakes and valleys and woods and hills below. Yet it fixes itself over no object in particular. Even so was the condition of the poet who passed in view many an object in nature but could find interest in nothing whatsoever. **N. B.**—This figure of **simile** so graphically executed, gives evidence of Wordsworth's minute observation of even the commonest of the common phenomena of nature. Objects made conspicuous by contrast left a ready and permanent impression on the mind of the poet. In one of his Lucy-poems, the poet compares the ideal creature of his imagination to (1) "a violet by a mossy stone," and to (1) "a star, when only one is shining in the sky."

*Floats*—glides on without any exercise of will, borne on the wings of the wind. *On high*—in the sky above. *Vales*—valleys; plain ground or depressions between hills or shoulders of mountains. *All at once*—all on a sudden,—not by instalment or part. **N. B.**—Here is another reason for the shock to the poet's emotion. The first reason is that the poet was in a vacant mood with no particular object to interest him. The second

reason is that the object which at last drew his attention came within his view as a surprise.

*A crowd, a host*—quite numberless ; a vast number. **N.B.**—The first impression is that of a very large number of things thronging together without method,—hence a crowd. The next revised impression is that of orderliness prevailing in the disposition of a huge number of things,—hence ‘a host’, an army in battle array. *Golden*—of bright yellow colour. *Beside*—by the side of ; on the margin of. *The lake*—The presence of the lake in the neighbourhood must have increased the intensity of the beauty by evident contrast in colour. *The trees*—The green of the trees, like the blue of the waters must have heightened the intensity of the bright yellow colour of the daffodils. *Fluttering*—This movement of the flowers suggests the irregularity of the draughts of wind. *Dancing*—moving in rhythm, at regular intervals. This movement suggests the occasional regularity in the motion of the wind. *Breeze*—mild movement of the wind on a summer’s day.

**St. 2. Substance**—[The extensive field of yellow daffodils spreading under the trees with green foliage, and by the side of the blue waters of the lake, gave to the poet the impression of the Milky Way in the blue sky. The flowers were being swayed to and fro by the summer breeze.]

**Paraphrase.**—The sight at first must have appeared unique and singular to the poet. The bright little yellow flowers, swayed to and fro by the summer breeze, gave to the poet the impression of the multitude of stars, spreading across the blue of the sky in a wide belt,—generally known as the Milky Way or Galaxy. The poet simply failed to form an estimate of the number of even those flowers which fell within the range of a single glance. All of them, swayed by the breeze, appeared to enjoy their existence in the gayest spirit possible. They danced and tossed their heads, forgetting everything else connected with their life and destiny.

*Continuous*—spreading in unbroken succession. *Shine and twinkle*—glimmer and shed a bright white light. *Milky Way*—Galaxy, *Via Lactea* of the Romans, and *হায়াপথ* of Hindu astronomy. In astronomy it is that long, luminous track or zone which encompasses the heavens, forming nearly a great circle

*Jocund*—merry ; holiday-making. *Company*—society. *A Poet... company*—**Expl.** The poet, at the sight of the bright yellow daffodils, analyses his own emotion. He says that when, under the sway of the mild breeze of summer, the waves were dancing merrily, with the light of the day reflected on them ; and when the daffodils were vying with the waves in their display of joy ; —who could be so unfeeling as not to abandon himself to the joy of the moment ? When such is the case with ordinary men, the state of a poet's mind at such a sight of joy and jubilation can more easily be imagined than described,—and Wordsworth himself has admitted that the joyful sight made him exceedingly gay.

[N.B.—Wordsworth himself has elsewhere differentiated a poet from ordinary men, "He (the poet) is a man speaking to men ; a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind ; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him ; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."]

N.B.—"The effect described by the poet must have been greatly enhanced by the proximity of the dancing lake-water beyond the flowers, bright blue under the sun. You know what a fine contrast is made by the meeting of blue and yellow. This is a bit of painting from the English lakes."—*Prof. Hearn.*

*Gazed*—looked on in eagerness. *Wealth*—treasure of delight. *Show*—sight. *I gazed—and gazed etc.*—**Expl.** I could not take away my eyes from them for a long time and lost myself in meditation of the present delight,—so Wordsworth means to say. He was profoundly stirred in his imagination by finding the dancing waves and the dancing flowers enjoying their existence, though short-lasting, to the best of their ability ; while he himself was oppressed before this by a feeling of languor, if not of melancholy. The infection of joy was too powerful even for a common man to avoid ; and for the poet (Wordsworth) it was simply overwhelming. In the merry company of the gay

flowers, he was, for the time, lost in admiration. But now, when he writes the poem, he is conscious of the permanent store of pleasure and delight which that sight had afforded to his mind. Whenever he feels the oppression of solitude or melancholy, he recalls to his mind's eye the scene of the dancing daffodils by the side of the dancing waves. His melancholy is gone at once, and the poet feels happy again. Of this abiding influence of the sight the poet was almost entirely unconscious at the time of his actual experience. So this last circumstance gives the poet the sense of an added gain in joy and pleasure, and he thanks his good chance.

**N. B.**—The idea suggested in these two lines and contained in the following stanza will be rendered clear to the student by the following words of the poet himself. Wordsworth held that good poetry can be produced only when the agitation of our first experience has subsided ; for, then the past experience being remembered in a calmer state of mind, it gives us hold upon the elements of feeling which otherwise would be missed or distorted. His words are : "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings ; it takes its origin from *emotion recollected in tranquillity* : the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction, the tranquillity disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind." The present poem is an illustration of this theory of poetry or poetical composition held by Wordsworth. Cf.—*The Solitary Reaper* :—

"The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more."

As also *The Highland Girl* :—

"Now thanks to Heaven ! that of its grace  
Hath led me to this lovely place  
Joy have I had ; and going hence  
*I bear away my recompense.*  
For I, methinks, till I grow old,  
As fair before me shall behold,  
As I do now, the cabin small,  
The lake, the bay, the waterfall ;  
And Thee, the spirit of them all."

**St. 4. Substance**—[Whenever the poet feels the burden of melancholy or languor, the scene of the dancing daffodils suddenly revives in his memory. The poet, regaining the pleasurable emotion connected with the experience (of the dancing daffodils), forgets the oppression of solitary idleness of melancholy.]

*Of*—often ; frequently. *Vacant*—languorous, oppressed by the want of any definite occupation to interest the mind. *Pensive*—melancholy. *Mood*—frame of mind ; disposition. *Flash upon*—strike across. *Inward eye*—the mind's eye ; the faculty of imagination which has the power of reviving or remodelling the elements of past experience stored in the memory, as distinguished from the external eyes. *Bliss of*—source of delight in. **Expl.** *For oft.....solitude—Here, in these lines, is contained the main point of Wordsworth's poem on The Daffodils, the passage is almost an exposition of his theory of poetical composition.* In addition to the delight of the hour, the dancing daffodils afforded the poet a permanent store of joy, which that sight had in reserve for him. He can now realise it in its fullness. Whenever the poet feels the oppression of solitude, languor, or melancholy, and there is nobody near him to relieve his distress, his past experience of the daffodils dancing in the breeze suddenly revives in his memory and relieves his languor or melancholy. (The joy he felt at the sight of them had been preceded by a mood of melancholy and a sense of utter loneliness ; so by the law of association and suggestion whenever the painful feeling occurs, the pleasurable emotion follows in its train).

**N.B.**—*Lines 21 and 22 were composed by the poet's wife and they have rendered her famous in literature. These are indeed the best lines in the whole piece, and their significance cannot be over-estimated.*

**N.B.**—Whenever a man finds himself left alone, and has nothing particular to do or think, he usually becomes self-reflective and is busy raking up the vestiges of his past experience. So this state of mind in the case of Wordsworth is not to be regarded as something uncommon or a hyperbolic

representation. We quote in this connection the admirable analysis of the situation by Prof. Hearn :

"But the point of the poem, written nearly one hundred years ago, is not in the description ; it comes, like a surprise, with the last stanza. Have you ever noticed what the effect of certain bright scenes may be upon your own senses ? It is at night particularly that the phenomenon may be studied. You blow out the lamp and lie down to sleep, and close your eyes ; then, all at once, in the dark you see in bright sunshine some incident that impressed you during the day. Perhaps it is a street, with people passing by, and children playing ; and perhaps it is the face of a friend with whom you have been talking. Or it is a scene of travelling,—a stretch of sea-beach, with waves breaking silently. This may come to you again and again—come to you also in dreams, and you will never forget it. I am told that old persons see these *after images* more clearly than young persons ; but everybody sees them at times. This is more than what is commonly called imagination or memory ; perhaps we might call it perfected visual memory. It may be pleasant or unpleasant. But if the experience thus recalled be of a happy or beautiful kind, a *visual memory* is accompanied by the revival of the same happy feeling."

*My heart*—which was filled with melancholy before this. *With pleasure fills*—overflows with joy. *Dances*—moves in unison. *The Daffodils*—the dance of the daffodils. *Dances...* *...daffodils*—flutters in delight keeping time with the rhythmical movement of the flowers.

### Questions and Answers.

Q. 1. What is the central thought of Wordsworth's lines on *The Daffodils* ?

Ans. See Introductory remarks on the poem.

Q. 2. Give a critical appreciation of Wordsworth's poem on *The Daffodils*.

Ans. See *Criticism* above.

Q. 3. Write the substance of the poem under consideration.

Ans. See *Substance* above.

Q. 4. What theory of poetical composition does *The Daffodils* illustrate?

Ans. See *N.B.s* on Stanzas 3 and 4 above

Q. 5. Quote from memory any one stanza of *The Daffodils*, and scan the lines.

Ans. See Hints on the subject above.

Q 6. Give the argument of the poem under review.

Ans. See *Analysis* above.

Q 7. Explain with reference to the context :—

(a) *I wandered.....daffodils.* (St. 1)

(b) *Continuous.....bay.* (St. 2)

(c) *The waves.....glee.* (St. 3)

(d) *A Poet.....company.* (St. 3)

(e) *I gazed.....brought.* (St. 3)

(f) *For oft.....solitude.* (St. 4)

Q 8. Write short notes on :—Golden daffodils, milky way, poet, inward eye.

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# L'Allegro & Il Penseroso

## INTRODUCTION

### LIFE OF MILTON

*Milton's life has been called a drama in three acts.* The first act covers a period of more than thirty years (1608—1639)—the time which he spent in preparing himself for the dedicated life of a poet; the second act opens with his return from the continental tour and takes up the twenty years of his life which were spent in the heat and controversy of politics (1640—1660); and the third is concerned with the greatest productions of his poetic genius (1660—1674).

John Milton, the third son of a scrivener, was born in December, 1608, in the city of London. His grandfather was a Roman Catholic and disinherited his son (the poet's father) for adopting Protestantism. The father of the poet was a cultured and accomplished gentleman, with a taste for music. The poet must have been greatly influenced by his father's strictness of moral principles and also by his love of music. At the age of twelve, Milton was sent to St. Paul's School where he came in contact with a man of profound scholarship in the Head Master, and had the opportunity of reading early Christian writers. While at school Milton was also under the tutorship of Thomas Young, a Puritan divine, to whose personal influence might be traced his later Puritanic sympathies, and who first taught him to write verse.

Leaving St. Paul's in 1625, Milton went to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he remained for seven years, taking his B.A. degree in 1629, and M.A. in 1632. There was some unfortunate hitch with his tutor, which sent him in a kind of rustication for a term. But the time spent here was a period of hard work and he was often found "tied night and day to his books" which must have put a severe strain on his eyes, culminating in the total loss of eyesight in his later days.



From the University, Milton retired to Horton in Buckinghamshire where his father was putting up at the time. Here he put in years of diligent study and meditation, and went on preparing himself for the task of a poet. *The time spent at Horton is in one respect the second most important period in the literary life of Milton*, inasmuch as *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Arcades, Comus and Lycidas* belong to this period. *These early poems of his are marked by a gladsome note, a freshness and liveliness of spirit and a delicate fancy.*

In 1638, Milton went on his continental travel and passing through Paris, Genoa, Leghorn and Pisa he finally came to Florence, where he made the acquaintance of many scholars and noblemen, including Galileo at Arcetri, and lived there a useful and joyous life for two months. But the news of the Civil War found Milton back to England in July 1639.

He at once plunged into the whirl of politics and controversy, and *literature lost him for twenty years*. He was made Latin Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs which brought him into contact with the great statesmen and politicians of the time. He took up the cause of the Commonwealth and in his enthusiasm poured forth pamphlet after pamphlet, upholding the actions of the republic and decrying the conduct of its adversaries. The works of this period, with the exception of the Sonnets, are in prose and are full of wrangling and spleen. With the exception of *Arcopagilica* and the *Tractate on Education*, most of these tracts are not very pleasant to read. But the death of Cromwell brought about the downfall of the Commonwealth and with it the downfall of Milton. The accession of Charles II meant "evil days" for Milton—his property was confiscated, and his life was spared only after great efforts had been made on his behalf by his friends.

When the hope of founding the Commonwealth was gone for ever, Milton once more turned to poetry, and the closing years of his life saw the productions of the greatest pieces—*Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. *Paradise Lost* was begun about 1658, finished in 1663 and published in 1667. It remains the greatest monument of his genius. Wearied and broken in fortune and health but never losing his confidence in the ways of God, Milton passed away in 1674.

## A. MILTON—THE MAN

1. **His loftiness of character**—*When we think of Milton as a man, we primarily think of the rigid purity and loftiness of his personal character.* His upbringing was good ; his father, a man of liberal culture and intelligence, did all he could to implant in his mind high principles and ideals. If he grew up to be a steady and sound man, he owed that to his father. The high ideal which ruled his conduct, he carried into his work as a poet. The man, he says, "who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things." *He never for a moment forgot this ideal, i.e., to be 'a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things.'* Late in life, it took the form of rigid Puritanism and produced that austerity and want of humour which mark his later work. Yet he was a character that never faltered or hesitated in the face of duty or what he conceived to be right and just, and was sternly opposed to compromise of any kind. A critic has summed up the character of the poet by saying that he was one of those "few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High."

2. **His sense of dedicated life**—No one took the business of a poet more seriously than Milton or regarded it with greater sanctity. *From his very youth his life was dedicated to poetry in a manner almost unparalleled in the history of literature.* He lived and wrote poetry. As a matter of fact he sought to make his life answer to his poetry, and his poetry answer to his life, each aiding and uplifting the other. As Matthew Arnold puts it, "What other poet has shown so sincere a sense of the grandeur of his vocation, and a moral effort so constant and sublime to make and keep himself worthy of it ?" The idea of writing something great which will live for ever, his eagerness for vindicating the ways of God to man was constantly present to his mind even in the darkest days of his life. His *Paradise*

*Lost* is the crowning act of years of study and discipline,—of a life dedicated to poetry.

**3. His love of liberty**—Milton was a hater of tyranny in all its aspects. Whether it is social, religious or political, he was ever ready to take arms against it and put it down. From his early life he was a lover of liberty and gave away the most precious years of his life in defending it. This passionate love of liberty is the key-note to his character. It hastened his return from Italy, just when the Civil War was impending in England; it inspired his loftiest writings; it made him part with all worldly prospects and comforts. The one theme of his prose-writings is liberty before everything. Mark Pattison is right when he says, "*He defended religious liberty against the prelates, civil liberty against the crown, the liberty of the press against the executive, liberty of conscience against the Presbyterians and domestic liberty against the tyranny of canon law.*"

**4. His Puritanism**—Milton's father was a member of the Puritan party (a party preaching a reformed Christianity, and advocating a simple and austere form of worship, almost with a fanatical zeal). He was educated at home by a Puritan tutor, Thomas Young; so Milton became an out-and-out Puritan. Indeed any serious-minded man like Milton at that time would have to be a Puritan. Simplicity and austerity are the very creeds of Puritanism. Milton tended more and more to an uncompromising simplicity and austerity as he grew in years. Of course, general laxity in morals and the abuse of the time helped on this tendency. But it had something to do still with his love of liberty. What was a Puritan but one who claimed the right of worshipping God in his own way? Puritanism is nothing but a demand for freedom of worship. No wonder then if Milton made Puritanism the governing principle, the inspiration of his life.

## B. MILTON—THE POET

### Characteristic of Milton's Poetry

#### MERITS

(1) **Sublimity**.—*It is Milton's poetry to which alone we can apply the epithet 'sublime' unreservedly. It is sublime both in matter and manner.* Milton's poetry abounds in lofty thoughts

and imaginings; in *Paradise Lost* it leaves the things of the earth and sings of creation, of the first act of sin, of the way of redemption, of the battle between the powers in heaven—"the poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven." He seems to be never more happy than when he lets his imagination expand itself with the starry space. "In reading *Paradise Lost* one has a feeling of vastness. You float under an illimitable sky, brimmed with sunshine or hung with constellations; the abysses of space are about you; you hear the cadenced surges of an unseen ocean; thunders mutter round the horizon; and if the scene changes, it is with an elemental movement like the shifting of mighty winds."

Milton has the *grand manner*, corresponding to the loftiness of his theme. As Matthew Arnold says, "Milton, from one end of *Paradise Lost* to the other, is in his diction and rhythm constantly a great artist in the great style."

(2) **Remoteness of association.**—*Millon was a widely read man. He could not strip himself of the echoes and reminiscences of the poets he had read; and if these come in again and again in his verse, he could not help it. It was of course no conscious, imitation of classical or other writers; his mind automatically recalls a familiar scene in a writer whom he had read, and weaves it into one he is describing. Milton is an extremely allusive writer; and the mind of the reader must go half way to meet him, if he is at all to be enjoyed. Macaulay notes this feature of Milton's poetry, "The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced not so much by what it expresses as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys as by other ideas which are connected with them."* Macaulay again says, "We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present and the distant near. New

forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence; substitute one synonym for another, and the whole effect is destroyed."

(3) **The bare simplicity of his ideas and the rich abundance of his illustrations.**—We notice a contrast in Milton's poetry; *we may say at once that Milton is both ancient and modern*. Ancient writers are distinguished from modern by the simple bareness of imaginative conceptions, and modern writers are distinguished from ancient by a complexity in illustration, and imagery and metaphor. Now Milton combines in himself both these characteristics. "Nothing is so simple as the subject-matter of his works. The two greatest of his creations—the character of Satan and the character of Eve—are two of the simplest—the latter probably the very simplest—in the whole field of literature. On this side Milton's art is classical (*i.e.*, follows the model of ancient Greek and Latin writers). On the other hand, in no writer is the imagery more profuse, the illustrations more various, the dress altogether more splendid. And in this respect the style of his art seems romantic and modern. In real truth, however, it is only ancient art in a modern disguise."

We have noted above the blending of Milton's original thoughts and emotions with the echoes and reminiscences of other writers. We may regard this, too, as a contrast—a contrast of "the soft poetry of the memory, and the firm, as it were fused, and glowing poetry of the imagination." Lastly, we may sum up in the words of Bagehot—"His words, we may half fancifully say, are like his character. There is the same austerity in the real essence, the same exquisiteness of sense, the same delicacy of form which we know that he had, the same music which we imagine there was in his voice."

Milton's style is wonderful and is hardly surpassed by any one in the whole range of English literature. *Stopford Brooke has finely summed up the merits of his style in the following words*: "Fullness of sound, weight of march, compactness of finish, fitness of words to things, fitness of pauses to thought, a strong grasp of the main idea while other ideas play round it, power of digression without loss of the power to return, equality of power over vast spaces of imagination, sustained splendour,

a majesty in the conduct of thought and a music in the majesty which fills with solemn beauty belong one and all to the style."

The combination of all these varied powers, this happy blending of language with thought produced *that perfection of workmanship* which critics often attribute to Milton.

### DEMERITS

(1) **Deficiency in human interest.**—*Milton's poetry suffers from a lack of human interest.* His great poems *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* have more to do with dogmatic Christian theology than with the fundamental realities of human nature. Milton was primarily a student and recluse; he had little opportunity of a direct acquaintance with human nature and human affairs. His active part in the political and religious controversies of the day might have helped him on to a knowledge of human nature and affairs but that knowledge did little to kindle his poetry into a vital warmth of feeling. Milton's poetry leaves us cold and unmoved; it expresses high reaches of thought and speculation, but also the poet's aloofness from humanity. Wordsworth has rightly said of him that his soul was like a star and dwelt apart; and his own character and his poetry are of a piece.

(2) **Want of humour.**—Humour would have been a saving grace to Milton's poetry, elevated as it is in tone and thought. But unfortunately Milton lacked a sense of humour. In his poetry the absence of humour could have been unnoticed, but in his dramas it is seriously felt. If not for anything else, at least for a light, airy touch in his poetry and dramas, we should have welcomed a sense of humour in Milton. Really his poetry makes sometimes dull, heavy reading. His attempts at humour result in the ponderous jocosity of the rebel angels in *Paradise Lost*.

(3) **Involved Diction:**—*Stopford Brooke thus criticises Milton's style:* "It is often not only needlessly, but, as it were, on set purpose involved; not dense merely, but contorted or garbled in structure. It loses freedom of movement.....delays too long, rarely brief. It is troubled with ellipses and the inversions are sometimes, even when they are deliberate, wearisome."

## CONNEXION OF L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO WITH MILTON'S LATER WORKS

*A gradual development of political and religious bias can be distinctly traced in the works of Milton. We shall find how a mind at first open and liberal became more and more rigid and onesided, as the social and political events of the day engaged his mind more and more. Two distinct types of influence—the joyous spirit of the Renaissance or the New Birth of Learning and his moral nature—were working in him. For a time, they were blended together; this enabled Milton to take a broad view of life; it was then that he could relish the innocent pleasures of life, or look at the joyous side of existence. Both his *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* belong to this period of his life. The tone of *L'Allegro* is decidedly light and gay, that of *Il Penseroso* approaches a little towards sternness. Nevertheless, the two are the product of a gay, light fancy, which can, however, take the colour of sadness, if necessary. The next poem is *Comus*, and in it his moral bias is distinctly uppermost; still his lyric gift, his airy, graceful touch, his light, fanciful mood are not yet gone. He does glance at the vices of court-life in *Comus*, but he does not seem to be too severe towards them. The spirit of the Renaissance—a love of beauty and a joyous sense of existence—is still active in him; it has something to do with the form of the poem, *Comus*, and still more with its tone of thought and reflection. His moral earnestness has not yet subdued his Renaissance-spirit. In *Lycidas*, we find ourselves in a different world altogether; the grace and loveliness of the world painted in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and even in *Comus* are no more to be seen. It is a stern world, aflame in wrath with the abuses in the Church and the State. Political events which had happened in the interval between *Comus* and *Lycidas* must have strengthened the moral bias in Milton. This bias appears to be fully confirmed in the *Sonnets*; except in one or two of them we hardly catch the gayer, livelier note of Milton's early days. In *Paradise Lost* Milton seems to have almost totally discarded the influence of the Renaissance, and as his object is to justify the ways of God to man, he writes now with a distinctly moral bias, and his rigid Puritanism finds its fullest expression in the poem. Milton has travelled a long way from his *L'Allegro* to his *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*; in this interval there has.*

been a considerable change in his outlook on life,—nay in his conception of the meaning of life. Stopford Brooke has justly remarked,—“The Milton of *Lycidas* is not the Milton of *Comus*. The Milton of *Comus* is not the Milton of the *Penseroso*, less still of *Allegro*.”

## INFLUENCES MOULDING THE LITERARY STYLE OF MILTON.

Apart from occasional borrowings and suggestions, the real influences which moulded the literary life of the poet, may be said to be four in number. *They are (i) The Bible, (ii) The Classics, (iii) The Italian poets, and (iv) English Literature of the Elizabethan period.* That a great scholar and staunch Puritan like Milton should know the Bible thoroughly is what is to be expected. There are hundreds of allusions to it, and not a page of *Paradise Lost* could be read without coming across some verbal similarity with or reminiscence of its thought.

Next to the Bible comes the influence of the classics. Milton was a great scholar, read deeply and possessed a good memory. He was a child of the Renaissance, and was thoroughly acquainted with the spirit and thought of classical writers. His writings are, therefore, steeped in classical allusions, very wide in range. Mr. Verity rightly says, “Milton's allusiveness extends over the whole empire of classical humanity and letters, and to the scholar his work is full of the exquisite charm of endless reference to the noblest things that the ancients have thought and said.” His language and construction have been also partly affected by his love of the classics. Italian literature exercised some influence on his style but to a far less extent than the classical. This is proved by the frequent mention of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso and others

Lastly, comes his own literature. Milton was one of the last Elizabethans, and he inherited some of the brilliant gifts of the Elizabethan age, e.g., all-daring imagination, power of invention, a tendency to experiment with the resources of language. We all know his feelings towards Shakespeare from the sonnet addressed to him, and he himself acknowledged that “Spenser was his original.” “*He was*” says Dryden, “*the poetical son of Spenser.*” Besides the author of the *Faerie Queen*,



there are two or three others, who helped in the formation of his literary style. They are the two *Fletchers*, whose influence is clearly noticeable in his early poems and even in *Paradise Lost*; and *Sylvester*, the translator of Du Bartas' *Divine Weeks and Works*. There might have been other Elizabethans who exercised only minor influence on Milton.

## L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO

*These two poems belong to what is known as the 'Horton Group of Milton's Poetry.'* They were written shortly after his leaving Cambridge when there was a good deal of the joyous spirit of the Renaissance left in him. They are marked by a gladsome spontaneity and liveliness which we miss so much in the later works of the poet.

**The Titles of the Poems** — A good deal of critical attention has been bestowed on the titles of the poems. The two main questions for discussion are—(i) what do the titles mean and signify, and (ii) why is it that Milton chose these titles?

(i) *Evidently the titles of the poems are Italian. L'Allegro* (from Lat. *alacer* = brisk) meaning the *Mirthful or Cheerful Man* has been found to be the appropriate name of the piece which is touched by a briskness, animation and gaiety of spirit. To quote Mr. Bell "the whole piece too is full of sound from the morning song of the lark to the whispering winds of evening, and from the merry bells of the upland hamlets to the busy hum of men in towered cities. So far, at any rate, the title *L'Allegro* is not at variance with the poet's meaning." But about *Il Penseroso* there is some difference of opinion. *It has been argued that Milton was wrong in the grammatical form of Penseroso as well as in its true significance.* Mark Pattison says, "He (Milton) was probably in the early stage of acquiring the language when he superscribed the two first Poems with their Italian titles. For there is no such word as 'Penseroso,' the adjective formed from 'Pensiero' being 'Penseroso'. Even had the word been written correctly its significance is not what Milton intended, viz., thoughtful or contemplative, but anxious, full of cares, carking." This charge, if true, would have been a serious one against a man of Milton's scholarship. But it has been found out that *Penseroso* was a

current form in Milton's times and meant *musings*, meditative. Dr. Skeat has referred to Florio's Dictionary where the two forms of *Pensieroso* and *Penferoso* are given and where "*penferoso*" is rendered "*pensive, careful, musing, full of cares or thoughts.*" So we find that Milton was correct in his titles.

(ii) The answer to the next question as to why Milton chose Italian titles and not English, can be given only by way of a guess. Most probably Milton could not find appropriate English words which would exactly convey his meaning,—"*Mirth*" and "*Melancholy*" having failed to satisfy his mind. Milton might have chosen these titles, obviously Italian, as they are more sounding and expressive than any English titles could have been.

## DATE AND SOURCES

(A) *Date*.—The exact date of these two companion pieces is not known. But it is well-known that these two belong to the class of poems (described as the 'Horton Group') which were written between 1632 and 1638, when Milton was preparing himself for the great task of his life by study and meditation. Now from the internal evidence it may be presumed that these two poems were written before *Comus*, the date of which is 1634. "The ground of this inference," says Mr. Percival, "is that generally *Comus* shows a maturer mind, and particularly that while the companion poems show an almost equal balance between the cavalier and the Puritan mode of life, each as a life capable of affording pleasures perfectly free from taint of vice, the masque (*Comus*) shows a frame of mind disposed to connect the cavalier life with vice and the Puritan life with virtue." This bias went on increasing as he advanced in years. So it might be inferred that these two poems (*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*) were composed earlier than *Comus*, i.e., between 1632 and 1634.

(B) *Sources*.—When we speak of the sources of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, we do not use the word in the same sense as we do in the case of Shakespeare. By sources here we mean the authors from whom Milton might have got the hint or suggestion for his poems. They are spoken of as three in number—Burton,

*Beaumont* and *Marlowe*, to whom are added the names of Sidney Breton and Barnfield.

1. In Burton's *Abstract of Melancholy* where Joy and Melancholy are pitted against each other, the following lines might have served as a hint to Milton :

All my joys to this are folly,  
Not so sweet as Melancholy !  
When to myself I act and smile,  
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,  
By a brook side or wood so green  
Unheard, unsaught for and unseen.

.....  
Methinks I hear, methinks I see  
Ghosts, goblins, fiends : my phantasy  
Presents.....  
All my griefs to this are folly  
Naught so damned as Melancholy.

2. Also in the same author's *Anatomy of Melancholy* in the chapter on *Exercise* the following lines are suggestive :

"But the most pleasing of all outward pastimes is to make a pretty progress, to see cities, castles, towns ; to walk among arches, groves, in a fair meadow by a river side ; to see some pageant or sight go by, to see an ambassador or prince met, received, entertained with masques, shows, etc. ; and in most solitary times to busy our minds with music, catches, merry tales of errant knights, lords, ladies, dwarfs, fairies, etc."

From the *Anatomy* Milton might have obtained the idea of linking up the moods of the mind to the varying aspects of Nature, and also the idea of dividing the subject into two companion poems.

3. A famous song in Fletcher's *Nice Valour* probably suggested *Il Penseroso* :

"Hence all ye vain delights,  
As short as are the nights  
Wherein you spend your folly  
There's nought in this life sweet,  
If man were wise to see't  
But only Melancholy,—

Oh Sweetest Melancholy !  
 Welcome, folded arms and fixed eyes,  
 A sigh that piercing mortifies,  
 A look that is fastened to the ground,  
 A tongue, chained up, without a sound !  
 Fountain heads and pathless groves,  
 Places which pale passion loves,  
 Moonlight walks, when all the fowls  
 Are warmly housed, save bats and owls !  
 A midnight bell, a parting groan !  
 These are the sounds we feed upon ;  
 Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley  
 Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely Melancholy."

4. Marlowe's two famous concluding lines of *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* have a close resemblance to the concluding lines of the two poems. Marlowe's lines are—

"It these delights thy mind may move,  
 Then live with me, and be my love."

**Personal Element in the Poems.**—The question has often been asked *how far these poems are personal*, or, in other words *how far the two typical characters (L'Allegro and Il Penseroso) described in these two poems may be identified with the poet*. The obvious answer is, that in one sense they are both personal as they set forth the two moods,—the cheerful and the melancholy—into both of which the poet could enter, and from both he could derive pleasure, though it seems true that Milton's sympathy lies more with the latter mood. It should be noted that there is little that is distinctly Puritan in either, and much that is, in fact, quite anti-Puritan in both of them. In *L'Allegro*, the echoes of romance, the dancing and rustic sports, the visit to the play-houses and the references to Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, certainly give us no hint of the fanatical austerity which was soon to shut the theatres, pull down the May-poles on the village green, and turn "Merrie England" into "Psalm-singing England". In *Il Penseroso* the poet dwells upon his love of pagan learning, and in imagination he haunts the cathedral, and enjoys the beauty of its dim aisles the sounds of the rolling organ, and the solemn liturgy of the English Church ; thus again he seems to have little in common with the Puritans who would ban these things. But

as to the choice of Milton between the two moods painted so elaborately, Hudson remarks, "*It is not difficult, however, to perceive the line of Milton's own preference—Milton's preference is for *Il Penseroso* rather than *L'Allegro*. A comparison between the closing passages of the two poems will show that while *L'Allegro* rests in the present, *Il Penseroso* looks forward to the future. This suggests that the more serious thought of life expressed in the second poem has for Milton a more lasting value than the lighter thought set forth in the first*"

**Scenery—Local or Ideal?** —Both *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* contain detailed descriptions of Nature in her various aspects. They have been spoken of as the first descriptive poems in English. But the question is whether these descriptions are local or ideal. We know that they were written at Horton, and it is quite likely that they may contain reminiscences of Horton. In fact, some of the descriptions closely tally with scenes to be found at Horton, e.g., "Towers and battlements.....bosomed high," "shallow brooks and rivers wide" etc., etc. Some critics have also put forward the claim of Forest Hill near Oxford, as giving hints for Milton's scenery in the poems. Now a little consideration will show that *the scenes are neither those of Horton nor of Forest Hill in toto*. Similar scenery occurs almost everywhere in England, and it is no use fixing it to a certain locality in absence of more convincing proof. Moreover the poet himself has sometimes used words and phrases which go to show that he *never meant his descriptions to be purely local*. For example, when he is speaking of "some high lonely tower" or "some, wide watered shore," he purposely makes them vague in order to be general. And thirdly, what have the critics, who fight for a locality, to say when we have scenes for which no original could be found either at Horton or Forest Hill? Do we get at Horton "mountains on whose barren breast the labouring clouds do often rest?" Moreover, we should bear in mind that Milton's aim in these poems was not to give realistic or faithful descriptions of places, but to depict the mood of a man in relation to his surroundings. Nature here serves only as a background or setting to the human mood or moods painted. Prof. Masson has justly remarked, "It is a mistaken notion of the poems, and a somewhat crude notion, to suppose that they must contain a transcript of the scenery of any one place, even the place where they were written. *That place (Horton) may have shed its influence into the*

*poems, but the purpose of the poet was not to describe the actual scenery, but to represent two moods, and to do so by making each mood move, as it were, amidst circumstances and adjuncts akin to it and nutritive of it." The descriptions, therefore, are obviously ideal, though marked here and there by local touches.*

**Nature in Milton's poetry :—***Milton was not a close observer of nature. Whenever he had to describe Nature, he generally fell back on his reminiscences or memories of scenes described by other writers, chiefly classical. A city-bred youth like him had very little opportunity of studying Nature at first hand ; or rather as a student and recluse he was buried among his books, and then again what time he could spare from books, he devoted to political and religious controversies. Of course, while living at Horton he might have had time for looking at Nature ; and whenever there is any true touch in his description of Nature (we do not mean that all his descriptions of Nature are false), we may generally ascribe it to his brief acquaintance with Nature at Horton. Pattison says, "Milton is not a man of the fields, but of books. His life is in his study, and when he steps abroad into the air, he carries his study thoughts with him. He does look at Nature, but he sees her through books... Man is to him the highest object ; Nature subordinate to man. He is not concerned to register the facts and phenomena of Nature, but to convey the impressions they make on a sensitive soul." It is for this reason, we do not get in the Nature of Milton what we so much appreciate in the Nature of Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth.*

*In fact, many of the faulty Nature-descriptions of Milton are to be ascribed to the want of close observation. Of course, some of these must be set down to the conventional language of poetry, but the majority of them cannot but be otherwise explained. What would be our inference when we read of the skylark coming down to the window, of the eglantine as twisted, and of the bee with honied thigh ? These are cases where Milton's observation is defective and no ingenuity for tortured construction can save him.*

**Is the theme confined to one day ?—***There has been difference of opinion on this question. (1) Critics like Dr. Masson hold that the poems describe the enjoyments of an ideal day of twelve*

hours, beginning from early dawn in the case of *L'Allegro*, and from evening in the case of *Il Penseroso*. Pleasures succeed one another and the whole round of them makes up twelve hours. Of course, it may be said *that in some cases diversions are too numerous and abrupt to be enjoyed in the course of one day*; as e.g., the pleasure of town which *L'Allegro* wants to enjoy after the villagers are asleep. But *here those critics are of opinion that he enjoys them not actually but in the pages of his books*. He must have visited pageants and theatres in imagination.

(2) *Others hold that Milton could never have meant his theme to be confined to one day. They argue that it is physically impossible for L'Allegro to hasten so soon to the town (after the villagers are asleep) in order to enjoy its pleasures.* Moreover, they are so numerous that they cannot produce anything but pain if enjoyed in the course of a single night. The explanation offered by Dr. Macon that *L'Allegro* would be reading them in books in the study instead of actually experiencing them, would make his character more like *Il Penseroso* than *L'Allegro*. *Further some of the pleasures are distinctly alternative and not successive (e.g., mute silence or the Philomel's song)—a fact which goes to prove that Milton never intended them to be confined to one single day.*

**The two kinds of pleasures compared**—As has been noticed before, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* represent two moods of Milton's mind, and the pleasures described are properly adapted to these moods.

When in the cheerful frame of mind he (*L'Allegro*), would rise with the lark, hear the cock crowing and would be gladdened by the distant hounds and horns of the morning hunt. He would enjoy the glory of the sun-rise and the rural song of the mower, ploughman and milkmaid while at their work. The distant prospect of lawns and brooks, mountains and battlements would spread out before his eyes, while the daily labour of the country people from morning till noon, varied by a thousand and one innocent amusements and festivities, would make him familiar with the joyous and peaceful life of a village. When they would retire early to bed he would hasten to the town to be in time to take part in its pageants and processions, festivities and theatres. These and the sweet melting note of music

would charm his soul and keep away from him the cankering cares and anxieties of the world.

Contrasted with these we have the serious amusements of the Pensive Man (*Il Penseroso*), who would wish to begin his 'day' with evening in a wood, delighting in the sweet song of the nightingale and the chequered beauty of the moonshine peeping through the rich foliage. Or if there were no nightingale, he would come out into the open and witness the calm splendour of a clouded or cloudless moon. Sometime he would wander on the lonely shore of a lake or sea and hear the distant curfew wafted to him by the wind. But if the weather were not fine, he would keep indoors in a room lighted by the hearth only, or spend his studious hours in a lonely tower reading the works of the master-minds of science and literature. In this way, he would pass his night till it dawned into a sober or dull morning. In the noon, he would go to a wood and have a sleep filled with mystic dreams. He would prefer sacred music which would bring heaven down unto him, and on earth he would have his ideal in the calm life of an old age passed in a peaceful hermitage in the observation of planets and stars and in the pursuit of science.

Thus we find a contrast almost point by point—one (L'Allegro) leading an outdoor life, the other (Il Penseroso) an indoor one, one in the midst of noise and festivities, the other in the lap of solitude, one passing the night enjoying tournaments and comedies, the other in the lonely tower outwatching the constellation Bear and studying the great masters of science and literature. L'Allegro is lulled by the Lydian music and does not wish to look beyond, Il Penseroso prefers sacred music and all his thoughts are looking forward to the mature wisdom of old age. Prof. Courthope says, "In the L'Allegro the mental experiences proceed from sunrise to nightfall, in the Penseroso they begin at night and end with the morning service on the following day: and during the parallel periods of time, the different sounds, sights and diversions are carefully balanced against each other: e.g., the song of the morning lark against the fall of the early shower; the noonday walk of the cheerful man, *not unseen*, against the secluded slumber of the melancholy man in the wood: the nightly reading of masques and comedies against the midnight study of Philosophy and tragedy."



**No mirth in *Il Penseroso*, but some melancholy in *L'Allegro*.**—Dr. Johnson in his criticism on Milton said that after reading the two poems he came to the conclusion that "*no mirth can indeed be found in his melancholy, but I am afraid I always meet with some melancholy in his mirth.*" Or in other words, *Il Penseroso* is true to his name, but *L'Allegro* is not. There is too much of the *passive element*, too much of merely *looking at* things (and not enjoying them) in *L'Allegro* to be capable of yielding the fullest pleasure. His amusements are '*unreproved*' and smack of Puritanic depreciation of pleasure. Moreover, *L'Allegro* is devoid of that *sense of humour* which adds grace to enjoyment. So Johnson's criticism is, to a certain extent, true. Milton could not impart to his characters that happy touch, that airy grace, which is the outcome of a sense of humour; it is no wonder then that even his *L'Allegro* has some melancholy in him, some touch of the austerity of Puritanism. [See Raleigh's criticism, quoted under "Literary Estimate"]

**Milton's Treatment of Mythology.**—Some general remarks may be made on the peculiar character of Milton's treatment of mythology. We must remember in this connexion that he was a great classical scholar. He freely handled the ancient mythologies altering and adding to them, and sometimes went so far as to create mythologies of his own.

**Originality in the creation of mythology.**—We often find that when Milton is not satisfied with a classical mythology, or when it does not suit his purpose, he goes so far as to substitute an original creation of his own in its place. This habit of coining mythology is very remarkable in the poet. Thus he boldly creates a parentage for "Melancholy" in *Il Penseroso* and substitutes a new one for 'Mirth' in *L'Allegro*. Being a Puritan he has reason to dislike the classical account which speaks of mirth (Euphrosyne) as the daughter of Bacchus and Venus. So he substitutes a new one, making Mirth the daughter of Zephyr and Aurora.

Like his study or description of Nature, his mythology is the result of putting together diverse elements. He arranges and combines materials from different sources and creates a new one to suit his own purpose. Thus in the classical mythology Erebus is the husband of Night; but Milton in order to create

a parentage for Melancholy, marries Night, not to Erebus but to Cerberus, the Hell-dog. Again, Cynthia the goddess of moon is driven in a chariot drawn by stags. In Milton 'stags' were replaced by 'dragons.'

## FORM AND METRE

(A) **Form** :—*In form they are pastoral odes.* Though both the poems are contrasted in tone and spirit, they are built up on the same principle in the presentation of thoughts, moods and characters.

Both of them open with an invocation and proceed to describe groups of scenes, so arranged as generally to correspond to the progress of day or night. The images presented in the poems only serve to illustrate the cheerful and contemplative moods of Milton's own mind. They are never out of place and are further embellished by all the ornament that Milton's varied and deep reading of classic and modern poetry could supply. He is reminiscent of the great masters in almost every turn of phrase and imagery, but there is not a thought or phrase which he has not bettered in the borrowing, and the setting everywhere is exquisite. His lively imagination gives fresh life and colour to everything that he has taken from others, and transmutes it into something of his own.

(B) **Metre** :—There is a very large proportion of trochaic lines in the two poems, that one might very well take Trochee to be the base-metre. Percival says, "Each begins with ten lines of alternate *iambic* trimeters and pentameters (with an occasional hyper-syllable at the end) and rhymes at irregular intervals." And also, "the rest of each poem consists of iambic tetrameters in rhyming couplets."

The following variations may be noted—

(i) An extra syllable, in the end of a verse—

Of herbs | and oth | er count | ry mess | es  
Which the | neat hand | ed Phil | is dress | es

(ii) The first foot of a trochee followed by regular iambic feet :—

Ba'sks at | the fi're | his hair | y stre'ngth.

- (iii) Rare use of a Spondee :—

Su'ch strai'ns | as would | have own | the ear.

- (iv) Occasional anapæst :—

In heav | en y clept | Euphro | syne.

## LITERARY ESTIMATES OF THE POEMS

(1) *Of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, I believe, opinion is uniform ; every man that reads them reads them with pleasure.* The author's design is not what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed ; but rather how among the successive variety of appearances every disposition of mind takes hold of those by which it may be gratified.

The cheerful man hears the lark in the morning ; the pensive man hears the nightingale in the evening ; the cheerful man sees the cock strut and hears the horns and hounds echo in the wood ; then walks "not unseen" to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milkmaid and view the labours of the ploughman and the mower ; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant ; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance. The pensive man, at one time, walks "unseen" to muse at midnight ; and, at another, hears the solemn curfew ; if the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted by glowing embers or by a lonely lamp, outwatches the North Star to discover the habitation of separate souls ; and varies the shades of meditation by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes of tragic and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication or some music played by aerial performers.

*Both mirth and Melancholy are solitary.....* The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, not the gaiety

from the pleasures of the bottle. The man of cheerfulness having exhausted the country, tries what "towered cities" will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendour, gay assemblies and nuptial festivities; but he mingles as a mere spectator, and when the learned comedies of Jonson or wild dramas of Shakespeare are exhibited, he attends the theatre; the pensive man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the church.

*Both his characters delight in music; but he seems to think that cheerful notes would have obtained from Pluto a complete dismission of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds procured only a conditional release. For the old age of Cheerfulness he makes no provision, but Melancholy he conducts with great glory to the close of his life; his cheerfulness is without levity and his Pensiveness without asperity. Through these two poems the images are properly selected and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction are not sufficiently discriminated. "I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart; no mirth can indeed be found in his melancholy, but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination."* —Johnson.

(2) *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso may be called the two first descriptive poems in the English language.....* It has been remarked "no mirth indeed can be found in his melancholy, but I am afraid I always meet some melancholy in his mirth." Milton's mirth is the mirth of dignity, his cheerfulness is the cheerfulness of gravity: The objects he selects in his *L'Allegro* are so far gay, as they do not naturally excite sadness: laughter and jollity are named only as personifications and never exemplified..... There is specifically no mirth in contemplating a firm landscape; and even this landscape, although it has flowery meads and flocks, wears a shade of pensiveness; and contains "russet lawns", "fallows grey" and "barren mountains" overhung with labouring clouds; its old turreted mansion peeping from the trees awakens only a train of solemn and romantic, perhaps, melancholy reflection. Many a pensive man listens with delight to the "milk-maid singing blithe," to the "mower whetting his scythe" and to a distant peal of village bells. .... Even his most brilliant imagery is mellowed with.

sober hues of philosophic meditation. It was impossible for the author of *Il Penseroso* to be more cheerful or to paint mirth with levity : that is otherwise than in the colours of higher poetry. Both poems are the results of the same feelings and the same habits of thought.....No man was ever so disqualified to turn Puritan as Milton. In both these poems, he professes himself to be highly pleased with the Church music, with Gothic cloisters, the painted windows and vaulted aisles of venerable cathedrals, with tilts and tournaments, and with masques and pageantries. What very repugnant and unpoetic principles did he afterwards adopt !...His system of worship, which renounced all outward solemnity, all that had ever any connection with Popery, tended to overthrow "the studious cloister's pale" and the "high-embowed roof" ; to remove the "storied windows richly dight" and to silence the "pealing organ", and the "full voiced quire." The delights arising from these objects were to be sacrificed to the cold and philosophical spirit of Calvinism, which furnished no pleasure to the imagination.....

—T. Warton.

(3) The words are arranged and chosen to imitate or suggest the thing described ; alliteration is used to brighten the effect, but much more sparingly than by the earlier men, such as his original Spenser. Throughout the *Allegro* the verse frequently rushes as if borne along by very joy : its character is swiftness and smoothness. Few, if any, pauses occur in the midst of the lines. Throughout the *Penseroso* the verse frequently pauses in the midst of the lines. It moves like a pensive man who, walking, stops to think, and its movement is slow, even stately.....The extreme simplicity of the two motives makes these poems simple, and this is one reason why children as well as others understand and have pleasure in them. The picturesqueness of the scenes, the clear-cut and vivid outline of the things described is also a source of delight to young and old.

—Stofford Brooke.

(4) His notable early poems.....have a singular interest and pathos. He was not long for the world in which these poems move with so ineffable a native grace. *They are the poems of his youth, instinct with the sensibility of youth, and of a delicate and richly nurtured imagination.* But they are also the poems of an age that was closing, and they have a touch of the sadness

of evening, "I know not," says Dr. Johnson "whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No Mirth can indeed be found in his melancholy, but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth." It is true; for *both characters are Milton himself, who embodies in separate poems the cheerful and pensive elements of his own nature—and already his choice is made.* There is something disinterested and detached about his sketches of the merriment in which he takes part only as a silent onlooker.

—*Raleigh.*

(5) *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso* are each arranged on the same principle, opening with an invocation, and proceeding to a series of descriptions so grouped as to express the gradual advance of day or night. As the light grows or fades upon the landscape, the poet guides us through a maze of light of many-coloured images and changing moods of feeling, all, however, harmoniously associated with the central object. In the *Allegro* the mental experiences proceed from sunrise to nightfall: in the *Penseroso* they begin at night and end with the vesper service on the following day; and during the parallel periods of time the different sounds, sights and diversions are carefully balanced against each other.

—*Courthope.*

## MILTON'S ENGLISH

The following is a short summary of the valuable notes on Milton's English given by Dr. Masson in his edition of Milton's Poetical Works. He treats it under five heads, and we shall take up the first four :—

- (i) Vocabulary.
- (ii) Spelling and Pronunciation.
- (iii) Grammatical Inflection.
- (iv) Syntax and Idiom.

(i) **Vocabulary.**—Milton's vocabulary is pretty large, consisting as it does, of 8,000 words exclusive of his prose-writings.

S. P.—14.

By a similar computation Shakespeare has been credited with 15,000. Of these less than 33 per cent are Anglo-Saxon or pure English in Milton's poetry, *i.e.*, of 8,000 words, about 5,300 are of foreign origin. It has been found out that *L'Allegro* consists of 90 per cent of foreign words and *Il Penseroso* of 83 per cent. But it must be said to his credit that the number of words used by him, that have become now obsolete or even archaic, is very small. Whereas in the case of Shakespeare more than five or six hundred words have gone out of use, not more than one hundred of Milton's words have shared the same fate.

(ii) **Spelling and Pronunciation.**—Dr. Masson says, "Milton's spelling, whether by his own hand in his manuscripts or through his printers in the original editions of his poems, was very much the spelling of his day. Accordingly, one of its most marked characteristics was *variability or want of uniformity*. There was no notion of a uniformity of English spelling in those days. Within a certain range every author or printer might spell as he liked, and so author differed from author, printer from printer, authors from printers." Thus 'soon' was written both as *soone* and *soon*, 'false' as *fals* and *false*, 'flower' as *flowre*, *fluwre*, *flour* and *flower*. Sometimes the pronunciation necessitated the alteration in the spelling. *Hundred* and *hunderd*, *furder* and *fardest*, *terf*, or *terfe* for "turf" are other examples.

(iii) **Grammatical Inflection.**—*As regards nouns*—In possessive case nouns ending in 's', the general practice of Milton is not to double 's' (the sign of possessive). Thus in the place of *Glaucus's spell*, he has *Glaucus spell*.

*As regards Adjectives.*—In Milton's time adjectives of two or more syllables received *er* and *est* for comparative and superlative degree (in the place of *more* and *most* now in use). He did not use double comparisons like the *more braver* or *less happier* of Shakespeare.

*As regards Verbs.*—He often formed the past tense by 't' in the place of 'ed'. Thus we have *uplift* for *uplifted*. He also prefers 's' inflection of the third person to 'th'. Thus he would write 'loves' for 'loveth'. Other peculiarities are like *sung* for *sang*, *sprung* for *sprang*, *took* for *taken* etc.

*As regards Pronouns.*—The following peculiarities may be observed here : (a) *his*, *her* for *its* (which had not at that time come into popular use) ; (b) *ye* for *you*.

(iv) **Syntax and Idiom**—"Accuracy, disciplined accuracy, is discernible, in the word-texture of all his poems.....In the minor poems grace, harmony, sweetness and beauty of image and colouring all but veil the strictness of purely logical connexion of idea with idea and clause with clause." In very few poets the order of words was so much under the control of feeling—and of the glow of poetic fire. Latin constructions sometimes abound in his poetry, but Milton's skill has happily adapted them to the genius of the English language.

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# L'ALLEGRO

Hence (1), loathed (2) Melancholy,  
 Of Cerberus (3) and blackest Midnight born  
 In Stygian cave (4) forlorn (5)  
 'Mongst horrid (6) shapes, and shrieks, and  
 sights unholy! (7)  
 Find out some uncouth (8) cell, 5  
 Where brooding (9) Darkness spreads his  
 jealous (10) wings,  
 And the night-raven sings;  
 There, under ebon shades (11) and low-brow'd (12)  
 rocks,  
 As ragged (13) as thy locks,  
 In dark Cimmerian (14) desert ever dwell. 10

- (1) Away ; be off
- (2) hateful
- (3) a triple-headed monster guarding the entrance to Hades
- (4) a den on the bank of the Styx, or a detested cave
- (5) deserted ; of wretched appearance
- (6) bristling (from the Latin sense)
- (7) impure
- (8) unknown, hence concealed from view ; ugly
- (9) all-pervading
- (10) eager to shut out all light
- (11) gloomiest shadows
- (12) frowning ; over-hanging
- (13) rough ; shaggy
- (14) shrouded in darkness as the land of the Cimmerians

ll. 1—10. *Barishment of melancholy* :—Away, hateful melancholy, the child of dark Midnight and the monster Cerberus. You were born in a desolate cave in Hell, full of grim figures, dismal cries and profane sights. Seek out some unknown den which all-pervading darkness jealously guards from the approach of light, and where nothing is heard but the croaking of the black, ominous raven, on a waste, deserted place, shrouded in perpetual darkness,—there dwell, lost in gloomiest shadows, and beneath frowning rocks, which are as ragged as your locks of hair.

But come, thou Goddess fair and free,		(1) named ;
In heaven <i>ycleap'd</i> (1) Euphrosyne,		called
And by men <i>heart-easing</i> Mirth (2) ;		(2) joy causing
Whom lovely Venus, <i>at a birth</i> (3),		the heart to
With two sister <i>Graces</i> (4) more,	15	forget cares
To ivy-crowned <i>Bacchus</i> (5) <i>bore</i> (6) :		(3) at one birth
Or whether ( as some <i>sager</i> (7) sing )		(4) Aglaia and
The <i>frolic</i> (8) wind that <i>breathes the spring</i> (9),		Thalia
<i>Zephyr</i> (10), with <i>Aurora</i> (11) playing,		(5) the god of
As he met her once <i>a-Maying</i> (12),	20	wine
There, on beds of violets blue,		(6) gave birth to
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,		(7) wiser
Fill'd her with thee, a daughter fair,		(8) joyous ; play-
So <i>buxom</i> (13), <i>blithe</i> (14), and <i>debonair</i> (15).		ful
		(9) is redolent
		of the
		spring ; full
		of the spirit
		of the spring
		(10) West Wind
		(11) Dawn
		(12) gathering
		May flowers
		or enjoying
		the May
		sports
		(13) brisk ; lively
		(14) gay ; merry ;
		joyous
		(15) 'of good ap-
		pearance ;'
		sweet-
		looking

ll. 11—13. *Welcoming of Mirth*—But come, O you beauteous and graceful goddess, called Euphrosyne by the gods and pleasant Mirth by men.

ll. 13—24. *The parentage of Mirth*.—

—whom beautiful Venus presented, with two more sister Graces, at one birth, to Bacchus, crowned with ivy-wreaths ; Or, who knows whether it may not be true, (as some wiser poets say) that the sportive wind, Zephyr, full of the spirit of the spring, playing with Aurora, as he met her once enjoying the pleasures of May on beds of blue violets, and dew-bathed roses that had just blossomed, begot you, a lovely daughter, so lively, gay and gracious in manners.

Haste <i>thee</i> (1), Nymph, and bring with thee	25	(1) thyself
Jest, and youthful <i>Jollity</i> (2).		(2) Merriment
<i>Quips</i> (3) and <i>Cranks</i> (4) and <i>wanton</i> (5) <i>Wiles</i> (6),		(3) witty jests
<i>Nods and Becks</i> (7) and <i>wreathed Smiles</i> (8),		(4) play on words
Such as hang on <i>Hebe's</i> (9) cheek,		(5) sportive
And love to live in <i>dimple</i> (10) <i>sleek</i> (11);	30	(3) tricks
Sport that <i>wrinkled Care</i> (12) <i>derides</i> (13),		(7) movements of the hand and the head in order to call another
And Laughter holding both his sides.		(8) broad smiles
Come, and <i>trip it</i> (14), as you go,		(9) cup-bearer of Jupiter
On the <i>light fantastic toe</i> (15);		(10) hollow
And in thy right hand lead with thee	35	(11) soft
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;		(12) care causing wrinkles on the forehead
And, if I give thee honour due,		(13) defies; laughs at
Mirth, admit me of thy <i>crew</i> (16).		(14) dance
To live with her, and live with thee,		(15) toes describing fanciful figures in dancing
In <i>unreproved</i> (17) pleasures free;	40	(16) band; party; company
		(17) blameless

ll. 25—36. *An Invitation to Mirth, and a description of her attendants*:—Hasten, O Nymph, and bring your companions,—Jest and the youthful spirit of mirth, smart sayings and turns of wit, playful tricks, joyful gestures, arch Smiles such as those on the lips of Hebe and usually found in dimpled cheeks; Sport that scorns all cares, and side-splitting Laughter; come all, dancing lightly and cutting fanciful figures; and leading in thy right hand bring, above all, the mountain-nymph, Liberty.

ll. 37—40. *The poet's desire to be admitted to the company of Mirth*:—If I have honoured you properly let me be enrolled as one of your companions so that I may live freely in your company and enjoy innocent pleasures.

To hear the lark begin his flight,		
And, singing, <i>startle</i> (1) the <i>dull</i> (2) night,		(1) suddenly alarm
From his <i>watch-tower</i> (3) in the skies,		(2) drowsy
Till the <i>dappled</i> (4) <i>dawn</i> doth rise ;		(3) high station
Then to come, in <i>spile</i> of sorrow (5),	45	(4) variegated with patches of light and shade
And at my window bid good-morrow,		(5) in order to spite or defy sorrow
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,		
Or the <i>twisted</i> (6) <i>eglantine</i> ;		(6) entwining
While the cock with <i>lively</i> (7) <i>din</i> (8),		(7) merry
Scatters the <i>rear</i> (9) of darkness thin ;	50	(8) noise
And to the <i>stack</i> (10), or the barn-door,		(9) last traces
<i>Stoutly struts</i> (11) his <i>dames</i> (12) before :		(10) piled up straw
Off list'ning how the hounds and horn		(11) walks about pompously
Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring morn.		(12) the hens
From the side of some <i>hoar</i> (13) hill,	55	(13) white with frost

II 41—150. *The enjoyments the poet expects :—*

(a) II. 41—116. *Enjoyments in the country—*

(1) II. 41—68. *Morning pleasures :—*While still in bed let me hear the lark soar up into the sky and sing from its high station so as to alarm the drowsy night, till at the break of dawn, when the sky is spotted with gray clouds, it comes down in order to drive away sorrow and greets me at my window surrounded by sweet briar, the clinging vine or honey-suckle ; while the cock crows to drive away the last lingering traces of darkness and proudly leads its family to the hay stack or to the barn door. Sometimes I may catch the cry of the hounds and the notes of horns, awakening the drowsy morning, from the side of a frost-covered hill, just as the hunting party marches on through a dense wood, echoing with the shrill sounds of horns and hounds.

Through the high wood <i>echoing shrill</i> (1).		(1) resounding with the shrill notes of horns and the cry of dogs
Sometime walking, not unseen		
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,		
Right <i>against</i> (2) the eastern gate,		(2) in the direction of
Where the great Sun begins his <i>state</i> (3),	60	(3) royal journey
<i>Rob'd</i> (4) in flames and <i>amber</i> (5) light,		(4) clothed
The clouds in thousand <i>liveries</i> (6) <i>dight</i> (7) ;		(5) bright yellow colour like amber
While the ploughman, near at hand,		(6) garments, ( <i>vide</i> notes)
Whistles o'er the <i>furrow'd</i> (8) land,		(7) arrayed ; clothed
And the milkmaid singeth <i>blithe</i> (9),	65	(8) ploughed into furrows
And the mower <i>whets</i> (10) his scythe,		(9) merrily
And every shepherd tells his <i>tale</i> (11),		(10) sharpens
Under the hawthorn in the <i>dale</i> (12).		(11) number; count
<i>Straight</i> (13) mine eye hath caught new <i>pleasures</i> (14)		(12) valley
Whilst the <i>landskip</i> (15) round it <i>measures</i> (19): 70		(13) immediately
<i>Russet</i> (17) lawns, and <i>fallows</i> (18) grey,		(14) objects of pleasure
Where the <i>nibbling</i> (19) flocks do stray ;		(15) landscape
		(16) spreads out
		(17) reddish brown
		(18) uncultivated lands
		(19) browsing

Often, *not invisible* I may take a walk, under hedges of elms and over grassy mounds right in the direction of the east; where the sun arrayed in purple and golden-yellow rays begins his royal procession across the sky, attended by his courtiers, the clouds in countless colours.

Close by in the foreground are the ploughman whistling as he attends to his work on the field, the milkmaid singing gaily, the mower sharpening his scythe, and the shepherd counting his sheep in the hawthorn-shade in the valley.

II. 69—92. (2) *Mid-day delights in the country* :—As the landscape opens before me, I see new objects of pleasure ;—red-brown heaths and pastures where the feeding sheep wander

Mountains on whose <i>barren</i> (1) breast	(1) bald ; bare
The <i>labouring</i> (2) clouds do often rest ;	(2) toiling up-wards
Meadows <i>trim</i> (3) with daisies <i>pied</i> (4) ;	(3) smooth-cut
<i>Shallow</i> (5) brooks, and rivers wide.	(4) variegated
Towers and <i>batlements</i> (6) it sees	(5) of little depth
<i>Bosom'd</i> (7) high in tufted trees,	(6) parapets
Where perhaps some <i>beauty</i> (8) lies,	(7) hidden
The <i>cynosure</i> (9) of neighbouring eyes.	(8) beautiful maiden
Hard by a cottage chimney smokes	(9) the observed of all observers
From <i>betwixt</i> (10) two aged oaks,	(10) between
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met	(11) of sweet taste
Are at their <i>savoury</i> (11) dinner <i>set</i> (12)	(12) seated
Of herbs and other country <i>messes</i> (13),	(13) dishes
Which the <i>neat-handed</i> (14) <i>Phyllis dresses</i> (15) ;	(14) skilful
And then in haste her bower she leaves,	(15) prepares
With <i>Thestylis</i> to bind the <i>sheaves</i> (16) ;	(16) bundles of corn-stacks
Or, if the <i>earlier</i> season lead,	(17) yellow ( <i>vide</i> notes)
To the <i>tann'd</i> (17) <i>haycock</i> (18) in the mead.	(18) stack of hay ; hay-rick

lazily ; high mountains over whose bare height upward toiling clouds do often pause ; smooth meadows dotted with daisies, small streams and wide rivers and a well fortified castle peering above, and partly hidden in a grove of trees, where dwells perhaps some beautiful lady, the chief object of attraction in the neighbourhood.

Close by there curls up the smoke of a humble cottage which stands between two old oaks, where two peasants Corydon and Thyrsis are sitting at their simple meal of rustic vegetable dishes cooked by some neat and skilful peasant girl Phyllis ; and then the latter hastily goes out with Thestylis to bind the sheaves of corn or comes to the dried hay-stack in the field if the season is not far advanced to permit it.

Sometimes, with <i>secure</i> (1) delight		(1) free from care
The <i>upland</i> (2) <i>hamlets</i> (3) will invite,		(2) up the slopes, or, away from the cities
When the merry bells ring round,		(3) villages (lit. cottages)
And <i>jocund</i> (4) <i>rebecks</i> (5) sound		(4) merry
To many a youth and many a maid,	95	(5) fiddles
Dancing in the <i>chequer'd</i> (6) shade ;		(6) marked by patches of light and shade ; parti-coloured
And young and old come forth to play		(7) long lasting
On a sunshine holiday,		(8) flavoured with spices
Till the <i>livelong</i> (7) daylight fail :		(9) home-brewed liquor
Then to the <i>spicy</i> (8) nut-brown <i>ale</i> (9),	100	(10) exploit
With stories told of many a <i>feat</i> (10),		(11) cream-cheese ; dainties
How Faery Mab the <i>junkets</i> (11) eat ;		(12) will-o'-the-wisp
She was pinch'd and pull'd, she said ;		(13) led astray
And he by <i>Friar's lantern</i> (12) <i>led</i> (13),		(14) labouring spirit
Tells how the <i>drudging goblin</i> (14) sweat	105	(15) a cup of milk
To earn his <i>cream-bowl</i> (15) duly <i>set</i> (16) ;		(16) kept apart as his due

11 91—116. (3) *Afternoon-pleasures in the Country* :—Often the care-free pleasures of the more interior villages attract me ; there the bells go round merrily, the fiddles play, and many joyful youths and maidens dance to the music in the variegated shade ; the old and young amuse themselves in the sunshine and take a holiday till it is dusk ; then they will come to their favourite drink—the nut-brown ale, so richly prepared, and over their cups will pass many stories of their own adventures—how Faery Mab robbed one of a dish of cream cheese, a maiden relating how she was a victim of her pranks, and a swain relating how he was led astray by the will-o'-the-wisp ; then about Robin Good-fellow the story goes round how the poor spirit will toil hard to obtain a cup of milk set apart for him as his reward,

When in one night, ere *glimpse* (1) of morn,  
 His *shadowy* (2) *flail* (3) hath thresh'd the corn  
 That ten day-labourers could not end ;  
 Then *lies* (4) *him* (5) down the *lubber fiend* (6), 110  
 And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,  
*Basks* (7) at the fire his *hairy strengik* ; (8)  
 And *crop-full* (9) out of doors he *flings* (10),  
 Ere the first cock his *matin* (11) rings.  
 Thus done the tales, to bed they creep, 115  
 By whispering winds soon *lull'd* (12) asleep.  
*Tower'd* (13) cities please us then,  
 And the busy hum of men,  
 Where *throngs* (14) of knights and barons bold,  
 In *weeds* (15) of peace, high *triumphs* (16) hold. 120

- (1) first appearance
- (2) unsubstantial, phantasmal
- (3) threshing implement
- (4) lays
- (5) himself
- (6) awkward goblin
- (7) exposes to warmth
- (8) his strong, hairy body
- (9) with a full stomach
- (10) darts
- (11) morning prayers, hence morning crow of the cock
- (12) soothed
- (13) having towers
- (14) crowds
- (15) garments
- (16) public entertainments

for threshing in one night, ere day-break, with his invisible flail, much more corn than ten labourers can ever finish in one day, and then the clownish spirit will lay himself down right along the whole width of the fire-place, keeping his great hairy body warm at the fire ; and ere the cock crows in the morning, he will make himself scarce after having done full justice to his meal.

These tales finished, the villagers creep to their beds and are soon soothed into sleep by the murmur of the breeze.

ll. 117—134. (4) *Evening-delights in the town* :—In the evening I am attracted by the pleasures of cities furnished with towers, and resounding with the din and bustle of life, where knights and barons dressed in garments of peace hold high festivities and



With store of ladies, whose bright eyes	(1) pour (shed)
<i>Rain influence</i> (1) and <i>judge</i> (2) the prize	power
<i>Of wit or arms</i> (3), while both <i>contend</i> (4)	(2) adjudge
To win <i>her grace</i> (5) whom all <i>commend</i> (6).	(3) in a wit-
There let <i>Hymen</i> (7) oft appear	combat or
In <i>saffron</i> (8) robe, with <i>taper</i> (9) clear,	tournament
And <i>pomp</i> (10), and feast, and <i>revelry</i> (11),	(4) compete,
With mask and <i>antique pageantry</i> (12);	fight for the
Such sights as youthful poets <i>dream</i> (13)	palm
On summer eves by <i>haunted</i> (14) stream.	(5) grace or
Then to the <i>well-trod</i> (15) stage <i>anon</i> (16),	favour of her
If Jonson's learned <i>sock</i> (17) <i>be on</i> (18),	(6) praise
	(7) god of mar-
	riage
	(8) yellow
	(9) candle-light
	(10) imposing
	procession
	(11) mirth
	(12) spectacular
	shows, dat-
	ing from
	early times
	(13) spin out of
	their imagi-
	nation
	(14) frequented
	by fairies,
	water-nymphs
	(15) on which
	plays are
	frequently
	exhibited
	(16) presently
	(17) comedy
	(18) be represent-
	ed

beautiful ladies watch either the wit-combat or the tournament, encourage the contenders, award the prize while the rivals strive with one another to win the grace of the Queen of Beauty whose praises all the people sing.

A wedding may also form part of these entertainments, with a display of yellow robes and bright tapers, attended by procession, rejoicing and mirth, and by masques and spectacular shows, dating from earlier times—such visions as may appear to youthful poets musing on summer evening by the side of a stream, frequented by fairies and water-nymphs.

Then one might go to the theatre if any play was being.

Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,	(1) sing as a bird does
<i>Warble</i> (1) his <i>native</i> (2) <i>wood-notes</i> (3) <i>wild</i> (4),	(2) prompted by instinct and nature
And ever, against <i>cating</i> (5) cares, 135	(3) spontaneous songs
<i>Lap</i> (6) me in <i>soft Lydian airs</i> (7),	(4) unrestrained by the rules of art
<i>Married</i> (8) to immortal verse,	(5) soul-corroding; gnawing at the heart
Such as the <i>meeting</i> (9) soul may <i>pierce</i> (10),	(6) immerse; dip
In notes with many a <i>winding bout</i> (11)	(7) tender, voluptuous music
Of linked sweetness <i>long drawn out</i> (12) 140	(8) allied
<i>With wanton heed</i> (13) and <i>giddy cunning</i> (14),	(9) responsive
The <i>melting</i> (15) voice through <i>mazes</i> (16) running,	(10) penetrate
	(11) 'intertwining of notes'
	(12) prolonged
	(13) seemingly careless yet really careful
	(14) seemingly without skill but really skilful
	(15) soft; liquid
	(16) intricate parts of the music

acted of the learned Ben Jonson, or of the untutored Shakespeare who writes freely and straight from nature and imagination, unfettered by the conventional rules of art.

II. 135—150. *The poet's desire to hear music and its charms for him*:—Always as a cure against cankering anxiety let me be immersed in tender, voluptuous music, accompanied by exquisite strains of poetry, such as may penetrate the sympathetic (or responsive) heart (of the listener) in notes happily blended, ever varying and prolonging the sweetness of the harmony, to which the soft human voice joins itself with a spirit of *abandon* and

<i>Untwisting</i> (1) all the chains that tie	(1) loosening
The hidden soul of <i>harmony</i> (2) ;	(2) music
That <i>Orpheus' self</i> (3) may <i>heave</i> (4) his head 145	(3) Orpheus himself, the father of music
From <i>golden</i> (5) slumber on a bed	(4) raise
Of heap'd <i>Elysian</i> (6) flowers, and hear	(5) happy ; blissful
Such <i>strains</i> (7) as would <i>have won the ear</i> (8)	(6) of Elysium, the abode of the blessed
<i>Of Pluto</i> (9) to have quite set free	(7) music
His <i>half-regain'd</i> (10) <i>Eurydice</i> (11). 150	(8) induced
These delights, if thou canst give,	(9) the god of the nether region
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.	(10) won, but lost again
	(11) wife of Orpheus

rapturous skill, releasing the spirit of harmony lying enchained in the human heart ; so that even Orpheus himself, the master musician, will be roused from his happy slumber in Elysium and listen to these strains of music which would have induced Pluto to set free Eurydice unconditionally—whom Orpheus won back only to lose again.

II. 151—152. *The poet's acceptance of Mirth* :—Mirth, if you give me these pleasures. I shall be your companion for ever.

# IL PENNEROSO

HENCE vain *deluding* (1) Joys,  
 The *brood* (2) of Folly without father *bred* (3) !  
 How little you *beslead* (4),  
 Or fill the *fixed* (5) mind with all your *toys* (6) !  
 Dwell in some idle brain, 5  
 And fancies *fond* (7) with *gaudy* (8) shapes possess,  
 As thick and numberless  
 As the gay *moles* (9) that *people* (10) the sunbeams,  
 Or likest *hovering* (11) drea<sup>m</sup>s,  
 The *fickle pensioners* (12) of 'Morpheus' (13) train. 10  
 But, hail ! thou Goddess sage and holy !  
 Hail, divinest Melancholy !  
 Whose saintly *visage* (14) is too bright  
 To *hit* (15) the sense of human sight,  
 And therefore to our *weaker* (16) view 15

1 deceitful  
 2 offspring  
 3 born  
 4 avail  
 5 steady ; sober  
 6 trifles  
 7 foolish  
 8 showy : fla-  
 ing  
 9 specks of  
 dust  
 10 inhabit  
 11 flitting about  
 on the eye-  
 lids  
 12 changeful  
 attendants  
 13 god of sleep  
 14 face  
 15 strike forcib-  
 ly on  
 16 too weak

ll. 1—10.—*The banishment of frivolous Mirth* :—Away, you idle and deceitful pleasures born out of sheer folly ; how little can you avail and beguile a steady mind with your trifles. Better take up your abode in some idle brain, and crowd the foolish fancy with gay, fantastic forms, coming as thick and in as countless a number as the dust-particles floating in a sun-beam, or like the dreams visiting us in our sleep—the changeful attendants of Morpheus (the god of sleep).

ll. 11—30. *Welcoming of Melancholy ; a description of her, and an account of her parentage* :—But welcome to you, Oh divine and holy goddess Melancholy. Your saintly appearance is too dazzling for ordinary human eyes to gaze upon.

And therefore to the weak human eye-sight you appear shrouded in sober black, the proper colour for wisdom. Though black, you are, in our estimation, no whit less beautiful.

<i>O'erlaid</i> (1) with black, <i>staid</i> (2) Wisdom's hue ;	1 overspread
Black, but such as in <i>esteem</i> (3)	2 sober
Prince Memnon's sister might <i>bescem</i> (4),	3 estimation
Or that <i>starr'd</i> (5) <i>Ethiop queen</i> (6) that <i>strove</i> (7)	4 befit
To set her beauty's praise above 20	5 changed into a constella- tion
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.	6 Cassiopea
Yet thou art higher far descended :	7 attempted
Thee bright-hair'd <i>Vesta</i> (8) long of <i>yore</i> (9)	8 Roman god- dess of the hearth
To solitary Saturn bore ;	9 of old days
His daughter she ; in Saturn's reign 25	10 stigma ; ble- mish
Such mixture was not held a <i>stain</i> (10).	11 dimly lighted
Oft in <i>glimmering</i> (11) bowers and glades	12 retired ; secluded
He met her, and in <i>secrel</i> (12) shades	
Of woody <i>Ida's</i> inmost grove.	
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove. 30	

than Prince Memnon's sister or the Ethiopian Queen Cassiopea, who having boasted of her beauty as greater than that of the sea-nymphs offended them (and was transformed into a constellation of stars). But you are of a nobler descent than they were. You were born long ago (while there was yet no fear of Jove's insurrection) of the lonely Saturn and his daughter the beautiful Vesta as they had chance of meeting frequently in semi-dark bowers and forest openings, and in the retired shades of the woody grove of Ida. In the age of Saturn such union between father and daughter was not regarded as blameworthy.

Come, <i>pensive</i> (1) Nun, <i>devout</i> (2) and pure,	(1) thoughtful
<i>Sober</i> (3), steadfast, and <i>demure</i> (4),	(2) devoted
All in a robe of darkest <i>grain</i> (5),	(3) self controlled
Flowing with majestic <i>train</i> (6),	(4) modest
And <i>sable</i> (7) <i>stole</i> (8) of <i>cypres lawn</i> (9)	(5) purple colour
Over thy <i>decent</i> (10) shoulders drawn.	(6) trail of the garment
Come, but keep thy <i>wonted</i> (11) <i>state</i> (12),	(7) dark
With even step, and musing <i>gait</i> (13),	(8) cloak
And looks <i>commencing</i> (14) with the skies,	(9) black muslin
Thy <i>rapt</i> (15) soul sitting in thine eyes :	(10) graceful
There, held in <i>holy passion</i> (16) still,	(11) accustomed
Forget thyself to marble, till	(12) dignity
With a sad <i>leadens</i> (17) downward cast	(13) manner of walk
Thou fix them on the earth as <i>fast</i> (18),	(14) communing
	(15) entranced
	(16) a state of spiritual exaltation
	(17) heavy
	(18) fixedly

ll. 31—44. *Another welcome to Melancholy with a description of her and her companions* :—Come, O musing nun, pious, holy, self-controlled, constant in virtue and modest; come, dressed in a dark purple robe trailing majestically behind and with a dark veil of linen crape hanging over your graceful shoulders. And as you come, preserve your habitual dignity, that steady and occasionally pausing step of one who is musing, and let your eyes express the rapture (ecstasy) of your soul, holding communion with the heavens. And there, caught up in that holy trance, totally forgetful of yourself, you seem to be transformed into a marble figure as you drop your eyes downwards slowly and sadly and fix them steadily on the earth.

And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,	45	(1) slim
<i>Spare</i> (1) Fast, that oft with gods doth <i>diet</i> (2),		(2) dine
And hears the <i>Muses</i> (3) in a <i>ring</i> (4),		(3) goddesses of poetry
<i>Aye</i> (5) round about Jove's altar sing.		(4) circle
And add to these retired Leisure,		(5) always
That in <i>trim</i> (6) gardens takes his pleasure ;	50	(6) well-kept
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring		(7) rises high
Him that you <i>soars</i> (7) on golden wing,		(8) borne on the wheels of fire
Guiding the <i>fiery-wheeled</i> (8) throne,		(9) one of the orders of the angels
The <i>Cherub</i> (9) Contemplation ;		(10) summon as in a whisper
And the mute Silence <i>hist along</i> (10),	55	(11) unless
' <i>Less</i> (11) <i>Philomel</i> (12) will <i>deign</i> (13) a song,		(12) nightingale
In her sweetest, saddest <i>plight</i> (14),		(13) vouchsafe
<i>Smoothing</i> (15) the <i>rugged brow</i> (16) of Night,		(14) mood
While <i>Cynthia</i> (17) checks her <i>dragon yoke</i> (18)		(15) softening
Gently o'er th' accustom'd oak.	60	(16) frowning aspects
		(17) Moon
		(18) the dragons yoked to her chariot

ll 45—54. *The attendants of Melancholy*:—And associate with yourself, Peace. Quiet and Abstinence that feasts with the gods and hears the Muses singing praise to Jove ; to these companions add also Leisure that keeps his own way apart from men, and enjoys himself in well-kept gardens : and bring also with you above all, Contemplation, the golden-winged Cherub who drives the fiery-wheeled throne of God.

ll. 55—84. *The evening pleasures of Il Penseroso*:—Summon also Silence to accompany you, unless the Nightingale will please to entertain you with a song in her sweetest and most plaintive mood, so that even Night will smooth out and straighten the frown on her brow and the moon-goddess driving along the sky, will draw in, and pause to listen to the song.

Sweet bird, that <i>shunn'st</i> (1) the noise of folly,	(1) avoidst
Most musical, most melancholy !	(2) songstress
Thee, <i>chauntress</i> (2), oft the woods among	(3) court ; make love to .
I <i>woo</i> (3), to hear thy even-song ;	(4) nown
And, missing thee, I walk unseen	(5) travelling in the sky
On the dry smooth- <i>shaven</i> (4) green,	(6) zenith
To behold the <i>wandering</i> (5) moon,	(7) white like the fleece of sheep
Riding near her <i>highest noon</i> (6),	(8) plot
Like one that had been led astray	(9) distant, even- ing bell
Through the Heaven's wide pathless way,	(10) coming with slow, un- dulating motion
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,	(11) solemn
Stooping through a <i>fleecy</i> (7) cloud.	(12) allow me (to stay out)
Oft, on a <i>plat</i> (8) of rising ground,	(13) quiet
I hear the <i>far-off curfew</i> (9) sound,	(14) suit my mood
Over some wide-water'd shore,	
<i>Swinging</i> (10) slow with <i>sullen</i> (11) roar ;	
Or, if the air will not <i>permit</i> (12),	
Some <i>still</i> (13) removed place will <i>fit</i> (14),	

O Nightingale, the sweetest, saddest bird, you avoid the company of foolish singers (or revellers). I often wander in the woods to hear your song in the evening; and if I cannot hear you, I take a walk on some unfrequented smooth lawn and watch the moon rising to the zenith like one lost and wandering in the spacious and trackless sky, or else observe her moving behind patches of white clouds.

Sometimes standing on a high plot of ground, I hear the sound of the distant evening bell coming slowly and solemnly across some wide river or lake.

At other times, if the weather is bad, I would prefer some



Where glowing <i>embers</i> (1) through the room		(1) small pieces of live coal
Teach light to <i>counterfeit</i> (2) a <i>gloom</i> (3),	80	in dying fire
Far from all <i>resort</i> (4) of mirth,		(2) imitate
<i>Save</i> (5) the cricket on the hearth,		(3) darkness
Or the bellman's <i>drowsy</i> (6) <i>charm</i> (7)		(4) place frequented; haunt
To bless the doors from <i>nightly harm</i> (8).		(5) except
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,	85	(6) sleepy
Be seen in some high lonely tower,		(7) incantation
Where I may oft <i>outwatch the Bear</i> (9)		(8) perils of the night
With thrice great <i>Hermes</i> (10), or <i>unsphere</i> (11)		(9) watch the Bear till it sets <i>i.e.</i> , till morning
The spirit of Plato, to <i>unfold</i> (12)		(10) an ancient Egyptian philosopher
What worlds or what vast regions hold	90	(11) bring down from his sphere ( <i>vide notes</i> )
The <i>immortal mind</i> (13) that hath <i>forsook</i> (14)		(12) disclose
Her <i>mansion</i> (15) in this <i>fleshy nook</i> (16);		(13) soul
And of those demons that are found		(14) left
In fire, air, flood, or underground,		(15) abode
Whose power hath a true <i>consent</i> (17)	95	(16) earthly body
With planet or with element.		(17) affinity

quiet, secluded place where the flicker of the red-hot ashes in the room makes the light appear more like darkness, far removed from the haunt of merry-making, and with no sound except the merry chirrup of the cricket and the drowsy voice of the watchman blessing the human habitation from nightly perils as he goes his rounds from door to door.

ll. 85—120. *An account of his midnight occupation* :—Or at midnight let me sit in some lighted, solitary and high watch-tower and study till day-break when the Great Bear disappears from view; let me read the works of Hermes, renowned as a king, as a priest and as a philosopher; or, let me study the philosophy of Plato to learn (i) about the condition of the soul after it has left the body, and (ii) about the spirits who live in fire, water, earth and air and have sympathetic affinity with the planets and elements.

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy		(1) carrying
In <i>sceptred ball</i> (1) come <i>sweeping by</i> (2),		sceptre in
<i>Presenting</i> (3) Thebes, or Pelops' line,		the hand and
Or the tale of Troy divine,	100	in royal robe
Or what (though rare) of later age		(2) majestically
Ennobled hath the <i>buskin'd</i> (4) stage.		(3) representing
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power		(the themes
Might <i>raise</i> (5) <i>Musæus</i> (6) from his bower ;		of)
Or hid the soul of Orpheus sing	105	(4) tragic (from
Such <i>notes</i> (7) as, <i>warbled</i> (8) to the string,		the high-
Drew <i>iron</i> (9) tears down Pluto's cheek,		heeled boot
And made Hell grant what Love did seek ;		or buskin
Or call up <i>him</i> (10) that left half-told		worn by
The story of Cambuscan hold,	110	actors in a
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,		tragedy)
And who had Canace to wife,		(5) bring back
That <i>own'd</i> (11) the <i>virtuous</i> (12) ring and glass,		to life
		(6) a poet and
		musician of
		Greece
		(7) musical airs
		(8) sung
		(9) stern
		(10) Chaucer
		(11) was the own-
		er of ; had
		possessed
		(12) of peculiar
		power or
		efficacy

Sometimes let me muse on the scenes of the sublime tragedies, with all their grand paraphernalia, and representing the fortunes of Thebes, the woes of the descendants of Pelops, and the calamities of Troy ; let me not also neglect the later plays of Shakespeare which have graced the tragic stage.

O melancholy maiden, I wish that you could revive and bring back Musæus from his abode in Elysium, or that you could command the spirit of Orpheus to sing such songs as, but accompanied by a stringed instrument, drew tears from the stern god of Hell and made him grant his prayer ; or I wish you could call back to life Chaucer who left the Squire's Tale unfinished dealing with Cambuscan, and his two sons Camball and Algarsife, and his daughter, who possessed the magic ring

And of the wondrous horse of brass		(1) anything
On which the Tartar king did ride ;	115	(2) poets
And if <i>ought</i> (1) else great <i>bards</i> (2) beside		(3) wise
In <i>sage</i> (3) and <i>solemn</i> (4) tunes have sung,		(4) serious
Of <i>turneys</i> (5), and of <i>trophies</i> (6) hung,		(5) mock-fights
Of forests, and <i>enchantments</i> (7) <i>drear</i> (8),		(6) memorials of victory ob- tained from the defeated enemy
Where more is meant than meets the ear.	120	(7) magic spells
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale <i>career</i> (9),		(8) dreadful
Till <i>civil-suited</i> (10) Morn appear,		(9) course ; jour- ney
		(10) dressed so- berly like a citizen

and glass, and the horse of brass which the Tartar king rode. And let whatever else great poets have written in serious and sublime style, about tournaments and achievements in battle, about forests and dreadful magic power, where there is always a deeper meaning beneath the obvious one, also claim my attention.

II. 121—130. *The poet's morning pleasures* :—The pale night having been passed in this way, morning will appear

Not <i>trick't</i> (1) and <i>frounc't</i> (2) as she was <i>wont</i> (3)	(1) adorned with finery
With the <i>Atlic</i> boy (4) to hunt,	(2) having the hair curled
But <i>kercheft</i> (5) in a <i>comely</i> (6) cloud,	(3) accustomed
While <i>rocking</i> (7) winds are <i>pip'ing</i> (8) loud,	(4) Cephalus
Or <i>usher'd</i> (9) with a shower still,	(5) having the head covered
When the gust hath <i>blown his fill</i> (10),	(6) beautiful
Ending on the rustling leaves,	(7) moving backward and forward
With minute-drops from off the <i>eaves</i> (11). 130	(8) whistling
	(9) introduced
	(10) spent its force
	(11) edges of the roof

soberly dressed,—not surely that gay morning who adorned herself with fine clothes and curled hair when going on a hunt with her lover Cephalus, but a morning veiled in a graceful cloud, and attended by rough winds singing loud, or by a shower of rain, when the winds have spent their force, dissolving itself among the murmuring leaves and in minute particles of water gliding down the edges of the roof. Better, let there be a quiet shower after the gale has stopped and let me hear the rustling of the leaves and the drops of rain-water falling at regular intervals from the edges of the roof.

And, when the sun begins to <i>fling</i> (1)	(1) scatter
His <i>flaring</i> (2) <i>beams</i> (3), me, Goddess, bring	(2) gaudy ; too bright
To <i>arched walks</i> (4) of <i>twilight</i> (5) groves,	(3) rays
And shadows <i>brown</i> (6) that <i>Sylvan</i> (7) loves,	(4) pathways covered over-head ; avenues
Of pine, or <i>monumental</i> (8) oak, 135	(5) dimly lighted
Where the rude axe with <i>heaved</i> (9) stroke,	(6) not deep-black
Was never heard the nymphs to <i>daunt</i> (10)	(7) god of woods
Or fright them from their <i>hallow'd</i> (11) <i>haunt</i> (12).	(8) ancient
There, in <i>close</i> (13) <i>covert</i> (14) by some brook,	(9) raised
Where no <i>profaner</i> (15) eye may look, 140	(10) frighten
Hide me from day's <i>garish</i> (16) eye,	(11) holy ; sacred
While the bee with <i>honied</i> (17) thigh,	(12) resort
That at her flowery work doth sing,	(13) secret
And the waters murmuring	(14) shade
With such <i>consort</i> (18) as they keep, 145	(15) vulgar ; here, unsympathetic
<i>Entice</i> (19) the <i>dewy-feather'd</i> (20) Sleep :	(16) dazzling
	(17) filled with honey
	(18) companions
	(19) allure
	(20) with soft, velvet wings

ll. 131—154. *Noon-day pleasures*:—When the sun scatters his hot beams around, let me, O goddess Melancholy, retire to the covered passages of some dim-lighted groves, and the deep seclusion of pines and ancient oaks—(the favourite haunt of the god Sylvanus), where the rude sound of the uplifted axe was never heard to alarm the nymphs, or to scare them away from their sacred resort.

There in some secret grove, by some stream secluded from all vulgar eyes, let me hide myself to avoid the glaring bright rays of the sun ; while the humming of the bees, gathering honey from flowers, and the soft murmur of a rivulet mingling in harmony with other sounds of nature, will lull me to gentle sleep.

And let some strange mysterious dream		(1) flit
<i>Wave</i> (1) at his wings, <i>in airy stream</i> (2)		(2) streaming in the air
Of lively <i>portraiture display'd</i> (3),		(3) imagery un- folded
Softly on my eyelids laid ;	150	(4) utter
And as I wake, sweet music <i>breathe</i> (4)		(5) kind
Above, about, or underneath,		(6) spirit ; presid- ing deity
Sent by some Spirit to mortals <i>good</i> (5),		(7) performing their duty
Or th' unseen <i>Genius</i> (6) of the Wood.		(8) fit to be a place of study
But let my <i>due</i> (7) feet never fail	155	(9) enclosure round a covered walk
To walk the <i>studious</i> (8) <i>cloister's pale</i> (9),		(10) arched
And love the high <i>embowed</i> (10) roof,		(11) ancient
With <i>antique</i> (11) pillars <i>massy-proof</i> (12),		(12) supporting the weight of the heavy roof
And <i>storied</i> (13) windows richly <i>dight</i> (14),		(13) adorned with scriptural paintings
Casting a <i>dim religious light</i> (15).	160	(14) ornamented
		(15) faint light encouraging devotional feelings

Then let a strange and mysterious dream, unfolding itself in a scroll of vivid images come hovering in the air on the wings of sleep and rest softly on my eyelids ; and as I awake, let me hear, all around me, the gentle, low murmur of music produced perhaps by some beneficent spirit or by the invisible Deity of the wood.

II. 155—166. *Afternoon pleasures* :—Let me never fail to frequent the enclosure of some cloister fit to be a place of study and admire the beauty of the high, arched roof, the massive, ancient pillars supporting it and the richly painted windows through which sunshine enters—a pale, subdued light, well becoming the sanctity of the place.

There let the <i>pealing</i> (1) organ blow,	(1) loud-sounding
To the full voiced <i>quire</i> (2) below,	(2) choir of singers
In service high and <i>anthems</i> (3) clear,	(3) hymns of praise
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,	(4) melt ; overpower
<i>Dissolve</i> (4) me into <i>ecstasies</i> (5),	(5) raptures
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.	
And may at last my weary age	
Find out the peaceful hermitage,	(6) slowly acquire the knowledge
The hairy gown and mossy cell,	
Where I may sit and rightly <i>spell</i> (6)	(7) sucks in
Of every star that heaven doth shew,	(8) utterance
And every herb that <i>sips</i> (7) the dew,	
Till old experience do attain	
To something like prophetic <i>strain</i> (8).	
These pleasures, Melancholy, give ;	
And I with thee will choose to live.	

There let me hear the sonorous notes of the organ accompanied by the full chorus in divine worship singing the hymns of praise so sweetly as to cast me in a trance, and through the sense of hearing give me visions of Heaven.

ll. 167—174. *Desire for tranquillity in old age*:—In my weary old age let me live the quiet life of a hermit, wearing a garment of hair, and lodging in a moss-covered cell where I may have rest and study the stars (*i.e.*, study astronomy) and the herbs that are nourished by the dew (*i.e.*, botany); till the experience which I thus attain will give me something like prophetic wisdom and will enable me to look into the future and know its secrets.

ll. 175 176. *Final Acceptance of Melancholy*:—Melancholy, give me these pleasures, and I will choose to live with you.

## NOTES

### L'ALLEGRO

N. B.—*L'Allegro*, from Lat. *alac-rer*, (from which too comes the word *alacrity*) means the *Cheerful Man*, the mirthful man ; while *Il Penseroso* (from the root *pensive*) means the *Pensive, or thoughtful man*. Milton chose the Italian names for want of English words giving the exact shades of meaning, the corresponding English words Mirth and Melancholy being inadequate and liable to be misunderstood.

The word *L'Allegro* conveys the idea of quick, lively movement, hence there is an air of briskness pervading the whole poem. The gladsome spirit of youth is the striking note in the poem.

Ll. 1—10. The poet banishes Melancholy ; her banishment is essential for the cheerful man. [*Note that it is not the same Melancholy as that of Il Penseroso.*] In this poem, Melancholy signifies a dejection of spirits, springing from mental cares and worries. The Melancholy of *Il Penseroso* is of a different type ; it has a touch of musing, or rather of seriousness and has more to do with a tranquil, contemplative state of mind than with cares and "the weariness, the fever and the fret."

Besides inventing a goddess of Melancholy, the poet in giving her a parentage, makes free with the classical mythology. According to the ancient mythological account, Erebus (Darkness) and not Cerberus is the husband of Night ; but it is Milton's object to make Melancholy 'loathed,' and this he does by making a loathsome monster, Cerberus, the father of Melancholy. To say that she is the daughter of Erebus (Darkness) would have only implied the notion of gloom, associated with melancholy, and added nothing of loathsomeness.

1. *Hence*—i.e., go hence, depart. *Loathed*—hateful.

2. *Cerberus*—Cerberus was the three-headed dog that guarded the gates of Hell. Milton *invents* this parentage of Melancholy. He makes her the daughter of Cerberus and



Night. Melancholy is easily associated with darkness as the latter has something to do with ill-humours. Thus Milton makes Melancholy the offspring of blackest Midnight ; but to the ideas of darkness or gloom he has to add that of loathsomeness, and that he does by making Melancholy the offspring also of Cerberus.

2. Note that in ancient classical mythology there was no goddess of Melancholy. She is purely a creation of Milton.

3. *Stygian cave*—cave of Hell ; the Styx in classical mythology is the river of hatred in Hell. The original meaning of the word 'hateful' is also suggested here.

N.B.—One commentator points out that the den of Cerberus was on the further bank of the Styx, just at the point where the spirits of the dead were landed by Charon.

In *Paradise Lost*, Styx is called—

"the flood of deadly hate."

*Forlorn*—(1) desolate, (2) gloomy ; dismal. It is the past participle of the old verb *forleosan*. See Glossary.

4. '*Mongst*'—abbreviated for 'amongst.' *Horrid*—used in the Latin sense of 'bristling'. *Shapes*—figures. The vagueness implied by the word used lends an additional terror to the scene. *Shrieks*—cries. *Unholy*—impure, because found in hell.

5. *Uncouth*—radically it means 'unknown', hence strange, awkward ; [O. E. *Cuth* (modern *could*) is the past participle of *cunnan*—to know]. *Cell*—chamber.

Mark how Milton associates everything that is ugly and horrible with Melancholy—'*horrid shapes*,' '*shrieks*,' '*sights unholy*,' '*uncouth cell*'.

6. "Where Darkness covers all things entirely like some great bird with its wings." '*Brooding*'—covering all things (with some idea of sullenness). The idea is from a bird sitting on her eggs for hatching. See Glossary.

*Jealous*—viz., of light. Darkness does not like the approach of light ; there is also an underlying idea of the careful watchfulness of a parent bird protecting its eggs. Mark how all the three words 'brooding', 'jealous' and 'wings' suggest the idea of a bird. Darkness is very properly associated with jealousy or

suspicion but some think that it is improper to suppose here any allusion to the watchfulness of a brooding fowl, the pronoun being masculine.

The image of night or darkness conceived as a great bird spreading its black wings is a favourite one with Milton.

Cf.—*Comus*, ll 251—2

“—The raven down of  
Darkness”

and *Paradise Lost*, I, ll 20—21.

“—with mighty wings outspread

Dove like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss.”

Cf. also—

কুহীনীধিনী তার কাক-পক্ষ অন্ধ পাখা দিয়া রাখে আগলিয়া

—যতীন্দ্র বাগচী।

7. *Night-raven*—The raven is associated with Melancholy as it is a black and ominous bird. [But the raven is not a night bird.] Hence how can Milton's epithet '*night-raven*' be justified here? The answer is that its black colour and its being connected with evil omens in the mind of men might have led the poet to associate it with night.

Cf.—*Macbeth* (1. 4)

“The raven himself is hoarse

That croaks the Entrance of Duncan

Under my battlement.”

*Sings*—applied here to the notes of the raven.

8. *Ebon shades*—shades as dark as ebony; therefore the idea of total darkness is implied here. Percival discovers in it a reference to the trees in the garden of Proserpine, Queen of Hades—all the trees which were held to be poisonous.

*Low-brow'd*—overhanging; threatening.

9. *Ragged*—rugged; the rocks are rugged, rough like the dishevelled locks of Melancholy.

10. *Cimmerian*—The land of the Cimmerians, according to Homer, was enveloped in perpetual darkness. Cf.—“There is the land and city of the Cimmerians swathed in mist and in cloud; and the shining sun never looks down on them with his beams”—*Odyssey*, xi, 13. Hence “in dark...dwell” means ‘live in perpetual darkness in some desert place.’

*Find out some.....dwell*—**Expl.** The poet indicates here where the proper abode of Melancholy should be. Let Melancholy find out some strange, unknown den which is guarded by all-pervading darkness from the approach of light, and where the night-raven keeps croaking; there Melancholy should dwell in deep shadows, beneath frowning rocks, as rugged as her locks, in some desert, shrouded in perpetual darkness.

ll. 11—24. Melancholy having been banished, the poet welcomes Mirth and finds out a parentage for her too. He makes her the offspring (1) of Bacchus and Venus or according to another version, (2) of Zephyr and Aurora.

11. *Fair and free*—A favourite combination in English poetry meaning graceful and easy; the expression has rather become conventional. Cf. Drayton—"Find me out one so young, so fair, so free"—*Heroical Epistles*.

12. *Yclept (ycleapt)*—called. [From old English *clīpan*, with the prefix *ge*—for the past participle, which later on became *y*.] See Glossary.

*Euphrosyne*—(lit. *the kindly*) means Blitheness; the light-hearted one. Euphrosyne was one of the three Graces in Greek mythology, the others being Aglaia and Thalia. They were represented as the daughters of Zeus, and had something to do with the innocent pleasures of life.

13. *Heart-easing*—making the heart light and jolly by removing cares.

14. *Venus*—the goddess of love. *At a birth*—at one birth, meaning that the three Graces of which Euphrosyne is one, the other two being Aglaia, (Brightness) and Thalia, (Health) were born together at one birth.

16. *Ivy-crowned*—Bacchus was the god of wine, and in classical mythology the ivy was sacred to him. Bacchus was represented with ivy in his crown—Cf. *Comus* 54, 55 where Bacchus is represented with "clustering locks, with ivy berries wreathed." The tradition lingered in the custom of keeping an ivy bush at the doors of taverns giving rise to the proverb "good wine needs no bush."

17. *As.....sing*—as some more wisely celebrate you; according to a more learned account. [Note that this is Milton's

own version of the parentage of Mirth.] The poet here goes on to find out a second parentage for Mirth—*viz.*, that she is the daughter of Zephyr and Aurora.

**N. B.**—Milton is not here quoting from classical mythology, but expressing in mythological manner the opinion that mirth, instead of being produced by Bacchus and Venus, that is, by wine and love, is more wisely regarded as originating in such pleasure as that of the May morning, when the young go forth to welcome the return of spring, and to make preparation for the May-day pastimes.

18. *Frolic*—frolicsome ; gay. The word is now a noun and cannot be used as an adjective. *That.....spring*—is full of the spirit of spring ; brings the spring as it blows.

19. *Zephyr*—West Wind *Aurora*—the goddess of dawn in classical mythology. "It is the early freshness of the summer morning that best produces cheerfulness"—*Masson*.

20. *A-Maying*—on Maying (*cf.* similar meaning of *a=on*, in *alive, a-hunting, afool*) ; gathering May flowers ; enjoying the sports of May. The first day of May was formerly celebrated in England by gay festivities. In ancient times Roman youths had May sports and sang and danced in honour of Flora, the goddess of flowers.

21. *There*—where Zephyr met Aurora.

22. *Fresh-blown*—newly bloomed. *Washed in dew*—bathed in dew ; dew besprinkled. Shakespeare speaks of "morning roses newly washed in dew."—(*Taming of the Shrew*, Act II, Sc. i.)

24. *Buxom*—lively ; originally it meant bending, obedient (from A. S. *bugan* to bend. See Gl.).

*Cf.*—"Who died, and left a female heir.

So buxom, blithe and full of face."—*Pericles*, Act I, Sc. i.

*Blithe*—jolly ; cheerful. *Debonair*—genial ; elegant. [From Fr. *de bon aire*—of a good manner. See Gl.]

*Or whether.....debonair*—**Expl.** Here is a second account of the parentage of Mirth, which Milton seems to prefer. The idea that Mirth is the product of wine and love is rather disquieting to him ; so he invents a more respectable parentage for Mirth. Mirth is said to originate in the

sports of Zephyr, the west wind, and Aurora, the goddess of morning ; the gladsome spirit of spring is in Mirth ; the sports and festivities of the May-day ushered her into the world—in short, the goddess of Mirth is associated with all that is gladsome, lively and genial in spring.

11. 25—36. *The attendants of Mirth—*

25. *Haste thee*—hasten yourself. [For similar reflective uses of the pronoun, compare "Sit *thee* down," "fare *thee* well" where the pronouns are parsed as ethic datives.]

*Bring*—The objects of this verb are Jest, Jollity, Quips, Cranks, Wiles, Nods, Becks, Smiles, Sport, Laughter—all these being the companions of Mirth.

26. *Jest and Jollity*—Fun and Mirth.

27. *Quips*—witty jests ; sharp sayings. See Gl. *Cranks*—fanciful turns of wit. See Gl. *Wanton wiles*—playful pranks ; *wile* is the same word as "guile".

28. *Nods and becks*—significant gestures, made by the head and by the hands. Milton is thinking of a country-dance, in which noddings of the head and the waving of the hand form an important part.

*Becks*—may also be taken to mean bows of the head.

*Wreathed Smiles*—arch smiles, which cause the features to be wreathed or twisted.

29. *Hebe*—In classical Mythology Hebe was a beautiful, youthful goddess, cup-bearer of the gods.

30. *Love.....sleek*—which are generally found in sleek dimples. *Sleek*—soft or smooth. *Dimples*—the hollows in the cheeks.

31. *Sport.....derides*—Sport that laughs at anxiety which causes our brows to be wrinkled.

32. *Laughter.....sides i.e., side-splitting laughter*. Mark the appropriateness of the image. It is a picture in words.

33. *Trip it*—Come and move daintily with short, light steps as in a dance. *It* is a cognate object, adding nothing to the sense, which is equivalent to "trip a *tripping*." Such uses are very common in Elizabethan English. Shakespeare has *fight it, speak it, etc.* *Go*—come ; also "step along." There was

no sharp distinction in meaning between 'go' and 'come' in Elizabethan English. Hence the meaning of the passage will be,—'come, and move lightly (*i.e.*, dance) as you step along.'

34. *Light*—The toe is so called because in quick dancing it does not seem to touch the ground. *Cf.*—Shakespeare, *Tempest*, Act IV, Sc. ii—"come and go—each one tripping on his toe."

*Fantastic toe* is so called on account of the unrestrained, fanciful movements in dancing, in which the feet cut fanciful figures. Mark that 'fantastic' does not mean 'grotesque' here, but simply fanciful. Mark also the dancing movement of the lines "come.....toe" closely echoing the sense. (Notice the contrast "in the even steps and musing gait" of *Il Penseroso* 38).

Ll. 35—36. Liberty is here called a companion of Mirth: certainly there can be no mirth if there is no freedom.

*In the right-hand*—**N.B.** A certain degree of honour is conferred on Liberty by being led in the right-hand. *Lead*—bring as in a dance.

36. Liberty is here called a mountain nymph; why? because mountainous places are the best strongholds of Liberty. *Cf.* Wordsworth's sonnet on the subjugation of Switzerland—

Two voices are there—one is of the Sea,  
One of the mountains—each a mighty voice:  
They were thy chosen music, Liberty.

Milton is probably thinking of countries like Wales, Switzerland and Greece which preserved their love of liberty against all odds.

37. *If.....due*—If I have paid you proper respects.

38. *Admit.....crew*—Let me be admitted as one of your company.

*Crew* in Elizabethan English meant any company, gathering, assembly, and was not confined only to the crew of ships.

39. *Her*—*i.e.*, of Liberty.

40. *In.....free*—Mark the words 'unreproved' and 'free'. The pleasures that the poet asks for should be 'free', *i.e.*, unrestrained; but at the same time they must be 'unreproved', *i.e.*, unreprouvable, chaste, innocent pleasures (and not sensual enjoyments).

S. P.—16.

For similar uses like unproved = unprovable, *cf.* Milton "unvalued" *i.e.*, invaluable (*Lines on Shakespeare*). Elizabethan English is full of such uses. Shakespeare has 'unavoided' = 'unavoidable'; imagined = imaginable, etc.

Also mark the arrangement of words, a favourite one with Milton, where the noun is placed between two adjectives. *Cf.* *Lycidas* 6,—"sad occasion dear."

*And if I give.....pleasures free—Expl.* In welcoming Mirth the poet prays that he may be admitted as a member of her company, if he can pay her proper honour. The poet prizes liberty as much as Mirth; while he offers himself up to the keeping of Mirth, he expects to have the company of Liberty too. Mirth, however, does not mean to the poet any sensual, vulgar pleasure; free and innocent pleasures are what Mirth will provide for him. We have here some idea of the nature and condition of the poet's enjoyment. He cannot have mirth apart from freedom; mirth can give pleasure to him only when it is accompanied by freedom; then the mirth that the poet prefers is not any coarse, sensual pleasure, but a more refined and cultured pleasure.

*Ll. 41—68. The poet gives an account of his morning pleasures.*

42. *Startle.....night*—The lark sings very early before sunrise; hence its note takes the dull night by surprise. Hence the lark's song alarms the night and puts it to flight. *Dull*—(1) drowsy; (2) leaden-eyed.

43. *Watch-tower*—The high position in the sky which the lark reaches, is here compared to a watch-tower. From this place the lark can watch the dawn rise out of the East. Shakespeare speaks of the lark as singing "at heaven's gate." Shelley in his *Ode to the Skylark* speaks of the lark as a "maiden in a palace tower."

44. *Dappled*—variegated with streaks of light breaking through the clouds.

*Cf.—*

"—The gentle day

.....

*Dapples* the drowsy east with spots of grey"

Shakespeare, '*Much Ado About Nothing*' V. 3.

"*To hear....rise*"—**Expl.**—Very early in the morning L'Allegro hears the lark singing, after it has soared up into the sky. The sudden outburst of its song alarms the lingering night and puts it to flight. The lark keeps soaring till it reaches a very high point in the sky, and then it views, as it were, the streaks of light, heralding the dawn.

45. *Then to come*—Various constructions and interpretations have been given of this line—

(1) Taking '*to come*' as depending on '*to hear*' (l.41) the sense is that *the lark begins his upward flight, descends and then comes to the poet's window*. The objections to this interpretation are—(a) that it is not true to nature as the lark never comes to sing at people's windows. Hence if this interpretation is right, it will have to be admitted that Milton's observation of nature is obviously faulty. (b) The infinitives after the verb '*hear*' are used without '*to*,' hence "*To hear.....to come*" is absurd; but we get rid of this difficulty if we remember that as '*to come*' follows '*to hear*' after three lines, '*to*' has to be introduced as a sign of the infinitive.

(2) Taking '*to come*' to be co-ordinate with '*to hear*,' the sense is that *the poet comes to the window and greets the dawn*; or that he comes back home after a walk and bids good-morrow to the people in the house. But this interpretation is strained.

(3) It may be supposed that it is *the dawn who comes and bids the poet good morning*—i.e., the early morning light enters his room. This is a good idea but in this case we have to make the infinitive '*to come*' co-ordinate with the finite verb "*doth rise*" which is absurd.

*It is best to take interpretation (1) whether the fact stated is true to nature or not.*

*In spite of sorrow*—in order to defy or spite sorrow; in order to dispel sorrow by its merry notes. Note that '*sorrow*' has no reference to L'Allegro; the man of mirth cannot be supposed to have anything to do with sorrow. Here the bird sings as if to show its contempt for sorrow.

46. *Bid good morrow*—If it goes with the lark, the sense would be that the lark, after singing in the sky descends to its



nest on the ground, and passing by the poet's window bids him good morrow.

48. *Eglantine*—It is the same plant as the sweet briar; but as Milton names it separately, and also adds the epithet 'twisted' which it is not, it is probable that he means the honey-suckle. [*Another instance of Milton's inaccurate observation of nature.* He is wrong when he makes the lark come to the window, and he is equally wrong when he makes the eglantine a different plant from the sweet briar.]

49. *Lively din*—lively note.

50. *Scatters thin*—The cock is humorously compared to a hero routing his enemy, darkness. The plain idea is that the cock begins to crow just as the lingering darkness of night slowly breaks up and fades away.

*Scatters*—disperses; puts to flight.

*The rear*—rear-guard; here the last traces of darkness.

*Thin*—It suggests the broken ranks of night.

51. *Stack*—pile of grain or hay.

*Barn*—covered building for storing grain.

52. *Stoutly*—proudly.

*Struts*—walks affectedly with pride.

*Dames*—the hens. To call the hens *dames* is to give them a pompous dignity. [The cock is popularly called Lord Chanticleer and the hen *Dame* Partlet.]

53-56. *Of.....shrill*—here the poet hears the hunters.

ll. 54—55. "The hounds, by their barking and the hunters by their horns cheerfully awaken the sleeping morning.

*Cheerly*—cheerfully. *Slumb'ring morn*—"Slumbering" refers to men still asleep in the early hours of the morning."

*Hoar*—i.e., covered with frost.

N. B.—This suggests that the hunt is an affair of winter but elsewhere in the poem we have scenes of summer or spring.

56. *High wood*—high because on the side of a hill.

*Echoing*—resounding with the notes of horns and the cry of dogs. *Shrill*—sharp. Here the adjective has the force of an adverb.

*Oft list'ning.....shrill—Expl.* One of the pleasures of the cheerful man is to listen to the cry of dogs and the notes of horns just as they wake up the sleeping dawn. He does not take any part in hunting but he welcomes the cry of dogs and the notes of horns because other people derive pleasure from hunting. Just as the hunting party passes by, the echoes of the cry of dogs and the notes of horns are prolonged through the wood; and the cheerful man loves to listen to them.

57. *Not unseen—i.e.*, in frequented places. L'Allegro (the cheerful man) loves to visit the haunts of men. The pensive man walks 'unseen' (65 *Il Penseroso*). Notice the contrast. "Happy men love witnesses of their joy; the splenetic love solitude."—(*Hurd*).

*Sometime*—for some time.

58. *Hedgerow elms*—a row of elms forming a hedge.

**N.B.**—Warton, a well-known critic, has noted that the elm was a favourite tree with Milton. The Horton neighbourhood abounded with elms and it may be supposed that there is a touch of local colouring here.

59. *Right.....gate—i.e.*, facing the rising sun. *The eastern gate*—that part of the sky in the east whence the sun rises. In classical mythology the sun was represented as coming out of his palace in the east in a chariot.

*Cf. Cymbeline—*

"Hark, hark! the lark at Heaven's *gate* sings."

60. *Begins his state*—begins his stately, royal progress in the sky. The sun is compared to a king, and is supposed to traverse the sky which is his dominion.

61. *Rob'd in flames*—clad in blazing splendour. *Amber*—amber-coloured; yellow-coloured. Amber is translucent fossil resin, yellow in colour and found chiefly on the southern shore of the Baltic.

62. *Clouds*—are here compared to courtiers attending a king.

*Livery*—dress. See Glossary.

*Dight*—dressed; arrayed. See Glossary.

*Thousand*—refers to the various colours in which the clouds are dyed and the various shapes they have taken. *Dight*—dressed.

**N.B.**—The clouds are said to be dressed in liveries, as if attending the king of day at his coming forth in state procession from the eastern gate.

“*Sometime.....dight*”—**Expl.** This is one of L'Allegro's morning pleasures; sometimes he will walk *publicly*—not with the idea of avoiding the gaze of other people (*not unseen*) as Il Penseroso,—and he (L'Allegro) proceeds straight towards the east, where he may behold the glorious sun-rise. The whole sky being suffused with bright radiance, the sun looks like a king beginning his royal procession, and the clouds dyed in various colours, look like gorgeously dressed courtiers, attending on the king.

64. *Whistles*—The ploughman whistles to himself as he attends to his work.

**N.B.**—There is generally diffused joy in Nature, and the happy mood of L'Allegro seems to be a part of it. *Furrowed land*—land cut up into furrows, *i.e.*, narrow trenches made by a plough.

65. *Blithe*—merrily.

66. *Whets*—sharpens.

67. *Tells his tale*—Two explanations have been given—(1) every shepherd *relates a story*. It was a common occupation of shepherds to sit in the shade and tell stories; conventional pastoral poetry also represents shepherds as telling tales. Hence it is highly probable that Milton simply means ‘relates his story’. Against this it has been argued that morning is the time for work; why should then the shepherds be supposed to sit idly and beguile their time by stories? Again, “why should every shepherd tell one? And why should they *all* assemble under the same tree to do so?” *Percival*.

(2) The more natural interpretation, therefore, according to some commentators, is “*every shepherd counts his sheep*,” tale being equivalent to “that which is told or counted” (A. S. *talū* a number). Thus in the morning the shepherd opens the door of his fold and counts his sheep to see if any were lost in the night.

[Mr. Verity is in favour of the first interpretation, Messrs. Bell and Percival are strongly in favour of the second one].

69. *Straight*—straightway, immediately, implying that L'Allegro finds objects of pleasure wherever he turns his eyes.

70. *Landskip*—landscape. See Glossary.

*Measures*—sweeps round.

71. *Russet*—reddish brown ; here probably 'grey'.

*Cf. Hamlet*, Act. I., Sc. i., ll. 166—"The morn in russet mantle clad,"

*Lawn*—field.

*Fallow*—land ploughed but not bearing any crop ; hence land that has been left uncultivated for a long time. Bell points out that the two adjectives 'russet' and 'grey' indicate a scene more distant and one nearer at hand, respectively. See Glossary.

72. *Stray*—wander.

73. *Mountains*—"This passage alone would confirm the view that the scenery of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, though they may have been written at Horton, is not to be regarded as *all actual or local, but as mainly ideal and eclectic. A mountain near Horton was never seen but in dreams.*"—*Masson*.

*Barren*—bare ; devoid of any vegetation.

74. *Labouring*—(1) charged with rain, (2) toiling upwards (and so pausing in their journey on the mountain-breast).

75. *Trim*—neatly kept. *Pied*—variegated, because the daisies are of various colours. 'Pied' may also be taken with meadows, which are variegated with daisies. *Cf.*—"daisies pied and violets blue."—*Shakespeare's 'Love's Labour Lost,' V. ii, ll. 904).*

76. *Shallow*—of little depth.

77. *Battlements*—parapets ; surmounting walls of a fortified building, consisting of solid blocks of masonry, alternating with open spaces for the discharge of missiles. Percival sees in "Shallow brooks and rivers wide" a reference to the Thames and its affluents and in "Towers and battlements" a reference to Windsor Castle.

78. *Bosomed high*—peeping above, and hidden in the grove of trees. 'Tufted trees' are supposed by Percival to be Windsor Park.

79. *Lies*—lives.

*Beauty*—beautiful lady.

80. *Cynosure*—the centre of attraction or admiration ; the object to which all eyes are turned.

The Cynosure is the constellation of stars so-called from its resemblance to a dog's tail in shape. The Pole Star is at the end of the tail. The Phoenicians navigated by it.

Hence it has come to mean anything to which all eyes are turned.

*Neighbouring eyes*—the eyes of neighbours.

"*Towers...eyes*"—**Expl.** L'Allegro here mentions one of his noon-tide enjoyments. He sees lofty towers and parapets almost hidden in and peeping above trees, and an ancient castle, where dwells perhaps some beautiful lady, the chief object of attraction to the whole neighbourhood. In "towers and battlements" (l. 77) Milton may be thinking, as Masson suggests, of Windsor Castle ; thus there is a touch of local colouring here.

83. Corydon and Thyrsis are the names of shepherds in conventional pastoral poetry. Here they stand for two English peasants. So also do Phillis (l. 86) and Thestylis (l. 88) stand for peasant girls. (One commentator suggests the peasant girls may be the wives of the two peasants sharing the same cottage).

84. *Savoury*—of good taste. *Set*—seated.

85. *Herbs*—vegetables.

*Messes*—dishes of food ; originally meaning something placed on the table.

86. *Neat-handed*—skillful. *Dresses*—cooks.

87. *In haste*—It gives the idea of the busy life that the villagers lead. *Bower*—Here it stands for cottage (originally the room set apart for ladies as *Hall* for lords. See Glossary.)

*Where Corydon.....dresses*—**Expl.** L'Allegro takes an interest in the simple life and doings of villagers. He sees the smoke curling out of a cottage chimney between the old oaks and loves to imagine how two peasants are seated at their tasteful dinner, consisting of vegetables and other rural dishes, which have been cooked by a skillful peasant maid.

89. *If.....lead*—if the season be earlier ; because the hay-harvest comes earlier than the grain harvest.

90. *Tanned*—dried.

*Hay-cock*—pile of hay.

*Or if the earlier season etc.*—N. B. Here is an instance of the perplexed syntax too frequent in Milton. The conjunction *or* connects the verb *leaves* with two dissimilar adverbial clauses, one of purpose, another of concession. Phyllis leaves her bower in order to bind the harvest sheaves, or she leaves it, if it be the earlier season, to go to the haystack in the meadow.

91. *Secure*—free from care (Latin sense). See Glossary.

92. *Upland hamlets*—little villages among the slopes ; hence far removed from cities.

*Invite*—i. e., me.

94. *Jocund*—merry.

*Rebeck*—An instrument with three strings like the fiddle.

96. *Chequer'd shade*—The sunlight entering through the openings between leaves of trees produces patches of light and shade on the ground.

Cf. *Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus*, V. ii. l. 4—

"The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind,  
And make a *chequered* shadow on the ground."

ll. 93—96. *When the merry bells.....shade.*—**Expl.** L'Allegro is thinking here of innocent village festivities, including also a dance in which both young men and maids take part. It is not clear whether L'Allegro takes part in them or is a mere on-looker. Whatever may be the case, he has sympathy with these village people in their innocent sports and amusements.

N. B.—A Puritan would have surely looked askance at these things ; Milton does not seem to have as yet developed any stern Puritanism in him.

99. *Livelong*—lasting for a long while.

*Fail*—decline.

100. *Then to—i.e.*, then I go to. *Spicy nut-brown ale*—"a drink composed of hot ale, nutmeg, sugar toast and roasted crab-apples."

*Spicy*—flavoured with spices.

101. *Feat*—exploit; wonderful deed.

102. *Faery Mab*—the popular queen of the fairies; it was believed that she sent dreams. [Mercutio in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (Act. I., Sc. iv, ll. 54—95) gives an account of her feats.] *Junkets*—dainties; properly cream-cheese. *Eat*—a past tense here.

103. *She*—one of the girls assembled there. The popular superstition was that lazy servants were ill-treated by fairies.

**N.B.**—Many of the old poets refer to the circumstance of fairies pinching sluttish maids.

*Pinched*—Mischievous fairies were believed to torment people in this way. [So Falstaff is pinched by the supposed fairies in Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, V. 5.]

*Pull'd*—perhaps by the hair.

104. *Friar's lantern*—Milton here means the will-o'-the-wisp, the flame of marsh gas mistaken by travellers for the light of a lamp and so misleading them. It is also called Jack o'—Lantern.

But the word 'Friar' shows that Milton has confused the will-o'-the-wisp with the popular household spirit Friar Rush; the latter is distinct from the will-o'-the-wisp as he neither carried a lantern nor played tricks upon travellers in the fields.

[Verity suggests that Milton is meaning neither of the two, but "that the *Friar* of l. 104 is identical with the *Goblin* (i.e., Robin Goodfellow) of l. 105. He quotes evidence to show that Robin Goodfellow was called a *Friar* and that he carried a lantern.]

*He*—one young peasant.

105. *Drudging*—doing laborious work. *Goblin*—Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, a mischievous fairy who was supposed to perform many wonderful feats of labour. 'Goblin' is a supernatural being of small size but great strength.

*Sweat*—sweated (i.e., with labour). The original of this past tense was O.E. *Swat*—past tense of a strong verb.

106. *Duly set*—set apart as his due. A cup of cream was thought to be his proper reward.

107. *Ere glimpse of morn*—ere the first streaks of morning appear in the East.

108. *Shadowy*—As the flail is of a fairy, it is called shadowy or un-substantial, unreal *Flail*—threshing implement.

109. *That...end*—that could not be performed by ten day-labourers.

110. *Lies him—i.e.*, lays himself. Percival suggests here that Robin does the thrashing in the barn, and then enters the dwelling-place to sleep before the fire. *Lubber*—big, clumsy, lubberly spirit. Shakespeare calls Puck “a lob of spirits” (*Midsummer Night's dream*) but in fact Robin Goodfellow was an active spirit.

111. *All...length*—the whole breadth of the fire-place ; ‘Chimney here means the hearth.

112. *Basks*—warms by exposing to the fire. *His hairy strength*—his strong, hairy body ; in “hairy” we have an example of what is called “transferred epithet” ; it is the body of the spirit that is hairy.

113. *Crop-ful*—with his stomach well filled by the cream-bowl. The epithets that are used of Robin, as Percival points out, emphasize his gross animal nature. *Flings*—dashes in haste. It should be ‘flings himself’.

**N.B.**—Why does Robin rush out in such haste ? It is a popular belief that supernatural beings cannot remain abroad after the first cock-crow.

114. *Ere...rings*—before the first cock-crow; before the cock sings his first morning note. It was popularly believed that ghosts that come out in the night hasten to their graves before dawn ; so in *Hamlet* the ghost “faded on the crowing of the cock.” The fairies also were supposed to depart at day-break.

*Matin*—morning song ; the word is primarily used to denote morning prayers in churches ; here it refers to the morning crow of the cock.

*Matin*—Fr. matin, morning. Cf. *Hamlet*, Act. I. Sc., v, l. 89 ;

“The glow-worm shows the matin to be near.”

*She was pinched.....could not end*—**Expl.** One of the evening pleasures of L'Allegro is to hear the tales of the



peasants about the pranks of fairies. Here he mentions some of these tales. One peasant girl relates how she was pinched and pulled by the hair by a spirit ; a farmer relates how he was waylaid by the will-o'-the-wisp and how the spirit Robin Goodfellow, to earn his due reward of a cup of cream had, with his unsubstantial implement, threshed so much corn in one night as could not have been done by ten labourers working for the whole day.

*Then lies...rings—Expl.* The poet here speaks of the feat of Robin Goodfellow. The farmer relates how Puck did threshing that was the work of ten day-labourers, in one night, to earn a cup of cream, how after his work the clumsy goblin lay down stretching out his strong hairy body across the whole breadth of the hearth ; and how before the first cock-crow he hastened away, having his fill of the cream.

117. *Tower'd cities*—The poet passes on to the enjoyments in the city.

ll. 119–134. An important question has been raised here. *Are these sighs real or ideal ?* Does the poet actually see the sights (*viz.*, a comedy, a tournament, a masque, etc.) or does he read about them in his study ?

(1) *Prof. Masson holds the latter view.* He thinks that L'Allegro reads about them from the old Romances of chivalry like Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* ; he does not actually witness a comedy, a tournament, a masque, etc.

(2) *The other view supposes that L'Allegro actually sees the sight.* The man of mirth likes social pleasures and outdoor enjoyments. It is in keeping with his nature that he should see them and not merely read about them. The pensive man in the companion poem is self-centred and passes his time in his study. He reads tragedies whereas L'Allegro witnesses performances of comedies on the stage.

*Towered*—having towers and noble buildings. Milton is thinking of London or of Oxford. *Towered.....then—i.e.*, the pleasures of cities, furnished with towered buildings, will then attract us.

118. *Busy hum of men*—The poet is referring to the din and bustle of life in the city. The city is compared to a bee-hive by the word 'hum.'

119. *Throngs*—crowds. *Barons bold*—'Bold' is here a permanent epithet. In ballads and in popular poetry it was usual to tag on 'bold' to *barons*.

*Weeds*—garments. See Glossary.

120. *Weeds of peace*—in ordinary civic dress, not in suits of fighting armour.

*High triumphs*—public entertainments, *e.g.*, masques, tournaments.

Cf. *Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act VI, 1. 19—  
"With pomp, with triumph and with revelling"

121. *Store of ladies*—many ladies.

122. *Rain Influence*—Ladies are watching the combats and power seems to pour down upon the competitors from their eyes; *i.e.*, their looks are encouraging the combatants in their feats. The ladies instil courage or strength into the hearts of these competitors by their encouraging looks.

*Rain*—pour forth.

*Influence*—An astrological term meaning *something flowing in*,—the influence, evil or benign, exerted by the heavenly bodies upon the fates of men.

*Judge*—adjudge, award the prize; it is the ladies and not their eyes that award the prize here. Two verbs are rather loosely connected with one noun here.

123. *Of wit or arms*—The combat may be a wit-combat or a tournament. In connection with 'wit-combat', Milton is probably referring to the mediaeval Courts of Love, presided over by a lady called the Queen of Love, which were so popular in France in the fourteenth century. The 'arms-combat' or mock-fight or tournament was presided over by a lady called the Queen of Beauty. Milton may be thinking here of a tournament as described in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

*Both*—*i.e.*, both the rivals.

*Contend*—strive.

124. *Her grace*—the grace of her. *Her.....commend*—the favour of the lady whom everybody praises—the Queen of Love, if it be a wit-combat; or the Queen of Beauty, if it be a tournament.

*Towered cities.....commend—Expl.* The poet refers here to the pleasures of cities which L'Allegro seeks after he has exhausted the pleasures of the country (*i.e.*, villages). In the city L'Allegro finds himself in the midst of knights and barons who have laid aside their suits of armour and have appeared in civil dresses to hold public entertainments; there are contests of wit and of arms, attended by many ladies who are there to encourage the competitors by their smiles, and also to award prizes to victors, each competitor trying to deserve the favour of the ladies, especially the Queen of Love and the Queen of Beauty.

125. *Hymen*—the Greek god of marriage. Masques, feasts, revelry and pageantry played an important part in the ceremony.

126. *Saffron robe* and *taper clear*—In masques, Hymen was often represented as carrying a torch (which Milton alters here to a taper) and wearing a saffron robe.

127. *Pomp*—an imposing procession; pageant.

128. *Masque*—A short drama imported from Italy into England during the reign of Henry VIII, which grew into the most popular form of entertainment during the reign of James I. It was generally written on some special occasion, was very short and of a fanciful character. Elaborate dress, scenery, music and dancing were important elements in it; moreover, it often had an allegorical significance. Milton's *Comus* is a masque.

*Antique pageantry*—spectacles in which mythological characters were introduced.

*Antique*—See Glossary.

130. *Haunted*—*i.e.*, frequented by nymphs.

ll. 129—130. *Such sights...haunted stream—Expl.* The festivities connected with marriage, such as processions, masques and spectacular shows, etc., might well stir the imagination of a youthful poet, musing on a summer evening by a haunted stream. The idea is that a youthful poet might imagine, or conceive of these things, if he were in the right mood for it, and a haunted stream, on summer evening might induce such a mood. L'Allegro implies that he will be a witness of these scenes of festivities, connected with marriage, which a

youthful poet can imagine, while musing by a haunted stream, on a summer evening.

**N. B.**—Milton may here refer to such entertainments as are set forth in the *Hymenæi* of Jonson, and therefore calls them such 'sights as youthful poets dream etc'

131. *Well-trod*—(i) where plays are frequently presented; (ii) where good acting is done.

*Anon*—soon after.

132. *Jonson*—Ben Jonson (1574-1637), an English dramatist and poet, a contemporary of Shakespeare. Here a contrast is intended between Jonson's learning and industry and Shakespeare's untutored genius. *Sock*—It stands for comedy in general (as buskin for tragedy). Literally *sock* means a kind of low-slipper worn by Roman comedians. This word, therefore, hints at the classical art and learning of Jonson's comedies.

*Learned*—because Jonson's dramas are full of classical learning and are written on the classical model.

133. *Sweetest*—An epithet often applied to Shakespeare "the sweet Swan of Avon." The epithet implies the easy grace of Shakespeare's writings, his genial spirit and humanity, his power of giving delight to his readers. Milton may be thinking here of the pleasant comedies of Shakespeare, like *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love's Labour Lost*, etc. [For a discussion of Milton's appreciation of Jonson and Shakespeare, see *Questions and Answers*.] *Fancy's child*—Fancy is used here in the sense of imagination—the vision, and the faculty divine, the creative faculty of a poet. The expression will mean, therefore, one supreme in the gift of imagination.

134. *Warble*—sing like a bird; the word implies the spontaneity of Shakespeare as contrasted with the laboured production of Jonson. *Native.....wild*—Shakespeare is here compared to a wild bird singing sweetly in the fulness of its heart. As a contrast to Ben Jonson who is the product of Art and Learning, Shakespeare is the product of Nature and Imagination.

*Wild*—unrestrained, i.e., not restrained by conventional rules of art.

*Native*—natural; as prompted by nature and imagination.

*Then.....wild—Expl.* L'Allegro says that at night he will go to witness dramatic performances at the popular theatres in the city. He will witness either one of the learned and elaborate comedies of Jonson or one of the sweet spontaneous products of Shakespeare's natural genius. He will appreciate either a learned comedy of Jonson who shows what can be done by art and culture, or a play of Shakespeare, who is "of imagination all compact," and owes little to art and culture.

11. 135—150. *Milton's magnificent praise of music.* The poet was a skilful musician himself and references to music are frequent in his poetry.

*Ever*—always; the cheerful man must always enjoy music.

135. *Against eating cares*—to keep off anxieties which eat out a man's heart, *i.e.*, which wear out one's life.

136. *Lap*—let me be wrapped; let me be immersed.

*Lydian airs*—soft and sweet music. "Of the three chief musical modes or measures among the ancients, the Dorian, Phrygian and *Lydian*; the first was majestic, the second sprightly and the third *amorous or tender*."

137. *Married to*—united to; associated with. Cf. Wordsworth's *Excursion*,—"Wisdom married to immortal verse." *Immortal verse*—lyrics which will ever be a delight to mankind.

138. *Meeting soul*—the sympathetic soul of the listener, responding to and going out as it were to meet the music of the performer.

*Pierce*—penetrate; enter into.

139. *Winding bout*—(1) circuitous turns, (2) intertwining of different musical notes.

140. *Of linked...out*—mark how the slow movement of the line closely echoes the sense.

*Linked sweetness*—different sweet notes linked or united with one another and producing harmony; sweetness resulting from the harmonious combination of musical notes.

*Long drawn out*—music of a slow, lingering movement.

141. *Wanton heed*—apparently wanton or careless yet extremely correct and careful. Figure *Oxymoron*, the joining together of two apparently contradictory words. The phrase is very expressive; *art lies in concealing art*—it is an illustration of

that. The phrase implies a combination of extreme care and recklessness, a measure of freedom and also conscious effort. The idea is that the skill for music has been so much cultivated that it comes easy to the singer, and he can sing on with an air of supreme unconcern.

*Giddy cunning*—really very skilful though apparently without skill. Giddy gives the idea of being enraptured, being totally carried away by the delight of music. The whole phrase implies that while the singer is carried away by the sheer delight of singing, or while he is music-intoxicated, he does not forget his skill or never fails to pay proper attention to the technicalities of music.

*Cunning*—skill, art (in a good sense) A. S. *cannon* to know.

Having described the raptures of instrumental music, the poet now speaks of the music of the melting voice.

142. *Melling*—soft and liquid.

*Mazes*—the intricate parts of the music.

143. *Untwisting*—unfastening.

*The chains...harmony*—Three explanations are possible—(1) There is music in the human soul; but it remains generally dormant, unstirred; it is only fine music that awakes this *hidden harmony in the soul*. This explanation agrees with the doctrine of certain ancient philosophers, in particular Aristoxenus, who believed the soul to have some such relation to the body as the sound of a string to the string itself. Shakespeare (*Merchant of Venice*, V. I), after speaking of the music of the spheres says :—

"Such harmony is in immortal souls  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear."

(2) "But the poet's purpose is not to show the effect of music on the senses but of a skilful musician on music. Milton's meaning is that as the voice of the singer runs through the manifold mazes and intricacies of sound, all the chains are untwisted which imprison and entangle the hidden soul, the *essence or perfection of harmony*. In common sense, *let music be made to show all, even her most hidden powers*."—Warton. This explanation is better than (1).

(3) Another explanation is that "the singer's voice gives life and meaning to the music that lies apparently dead and  
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meaningless in the black dots and strokes of a sheet of written (or *printed*) music."—*Percival*.

"*Ever.....harmony*"—**Expl.** L'Allegro wishes that music should be his constant enjoyment, as a means of averting mental anxieties which eat out one's heart. He wishes to hear soft and tender Lydian music united to an immortal song. The song with its various turns and its sweet repetition of various slow lingering notes will penetrate the responsive heart of the listener; it should be apparently careless but at the same time really rendered with careful correctness and skill. The liquid voice of the singer running through the intricacies of the music will give life to the spirit of Harmony that lies enchained in music.

145. *That*—so that. *Orpheus*—the mythological father of music. He was the incomparable musician and singer of Greek mythology; and when his wife Eurydice died he went down to Hell and charming Pluto, the God of Hell, induced him to set her free. Pluto made one condition that before they had gone out of the regions of Hell, Orpheus should never look back to see if his wife were following him or not. Orpheus, however, could not help looking back and lost his wife again.

*Heave*—raise.

146. *Golden*—because happy. [The slumbers of Orpheus are now happy, because he is re-united with Eurydice in Elysium.]

147. *Elysian flowers*—i.e., flowers of Elysium, the place according to Greek mythology where the souls of blessed people dwell in perpetual happiness.

148. *Strains*—music. *Won the ear of*—prevailed upon.

149. *Quite set free*—i.e., set free without any such condition, as Orpheus made with Pluto.

*Pluto*—the king of Hades (infernal regions).

*Quite*—unconditionally.

150. *Half regained*—Orpheus got back Eurydice, only to lose her again.

151. *These delights*—The 'unreproved' and 'free pleasures' spoken of above.

151—152. The poet accepts Mirth, but on the *condition* that he shall have the pleasures of which he has just spoken of.

## IL PENSEROSO

*Il Penseroso*—the pensive, musiac man (from the same root as *pensive*); we must remember that *this pensiveness is not the result of morbid melancholy*. It is, as Elton says, "a scholarly, warm, contented melancholy which is so responsive to beautiful images from without, and so richly stored inwardly with classic and heroic allusion, that it is too full to be sad; a melancholy, in fact, which just like the mirth of *L'Allegro* is more a literary mood which the poet prescribes upon himself than any profound temperament of his own." *Il Penseroso* is quiet and contemplative, never exactly depressed or gloomy. He loves solitude and contemplation; he is never ill-humored. His (*Il Penseroso's*) mood is that of grave reflection as *L'Allegro's* is of joyous emotion. But the choice of the title is not very happy here; because the word '*Penseroso*' does not avoid all associations of ill-humour. [On this point, Pattison notes (1) that "there is no such word as *Penseroso*"; the adjective formed from '*Pensiero*' being '*pensieroso*'; and (2) "even had the word been written correctly its signification is not that which Milton intended, *viz.*, thoughtful or contemplative, but anxious, full of care." Pattison is wrong here. See *Introduction*—*The Titles of the Poems*.]

Ll. 1—10. As Melancholy was banished in *L'Allegro*, so are false, vain pleasures banished here.

Hence—go away from this place. For these opening lines Milton was undoubtedly indebted to Sylvester whose *Tragedie of Henry the Great* begins thus—

"Hence, hence false pleasures, momentary joys,  
Mocke us no more with your illuding toys!"

*Vain*—empty; worthless.

*Deluding*—false, misleading; not really what they appear to be.

2. These joys are the outcome of ("the brood of") folly without father, *i.e.*, of pure foolishness; they are 'without father' implying that they are the product of *absolute* foolishness, of



nothing else except foolishness ; these joys are therefore utterly, wholly foolish.

3. *How...bestead*—of how little help or avail you are ; how little you profit. Only the past participle of the verb 'bestead' is still in general use, e.g., "to be hard bestead"—to be in urgent need ; to be in an evil plight. Compare also the phrase "to stand in good *slead*"—to be profitable.

4. You are of little avail in filling the fixed mind with all your toys. *Fill*—permanently occupy.

*Fixed*—steadfast ; sober.

*Toys*—trifles.

5. *Idle*—foolish ; worthless.

6. *Fancies*—imaginations.

*Fond*—foolish ; See Glossary. It is the past participle of O. E. verb *Fonnen*, to be foolish.

*Gaudy*—gorgeous ; the foolish imaginations of an empty brain will easily be captured by all that glitters, by forms and shapes, richly coloured—also the idle creations of the mind.

*Possess*—occupy ; fill.

7. *Thick*—numerous ; abundant.

8. *Motes*—particles of dust.

*Gay*—because they appear bright in the sunbeam.

*That people the sunbeams*—that are seen floating in the sunbeams in great number. This line "As...sunbeam" is undoubtedly from Sylvester's Cave of Sleep in "Du Bartas" where dreams are described as—

"The unnumbered Moats which in the Sun do play."

9. *Likest*—superlative degree of 'like'—most like ; most similar to.

*Hovering*—because the dreams seem to hover before our eyes. [*To hover*—to move near about flapping the wings.]

*Dwell...hovering dreams*—**Expl.** The pensive man warns off all vain, deluding joys, which are purely the offspring of folly. They can have their fit abode only in some idle brain ; they can bring only fanciful, richly-coloured images and silly notions

to the foolish imaginations. Those images and notions which throng into an idle brain will be as numerous as the particles of dust floating in a sunbeam, or may be likened to the shifting, changeful dreams which follow in the wake of sleep.

10. *The fickle...train*—**Expl.** Dreams are called fickle, because of their inconstant, shifting character. They are the pensioners, *i.e.*, attendants of Morpheus, the god of sleep. In 'pensioners' there is a reference to Queen Elizabeth's establishment of a body of Gentlemen Pensioners consisting of noble and youthful courtiers. Literally this word means 'one who receives a pension' and hence 'a dependent.' Shakespeare has a similar use of the word in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II., Sc. i.—

"The cowslips tall her pensioners be."

*Train*—something drawn along ; hence a *train of attendants*.

The simple meaning of the passage is—(dreams which are) the changeful attendants of Morpheus, the god of sleep. Morpheus is generally represented with a cup in one hand, and a bunch of poppies (from which *opium* is obtained) in the other.

12. *Hail*—welcome. *Divinest*—*supremely divine* ; this Latin use of the absolute superlative marks a high degree of a quality (and does not imply any comparison). Evidently a divine origin of Melancholy is intended.

13. *Visage*—face. *Saintly*—as sweet and pure as the face of a Saint.

14. *Hit*—meet ; touch.

*Cf.*—"From the barge

A strange invisible perfume hits the sense."

—*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act. II., Sc. ii, l. 217.

*Is.....sight*—is so bright that it dazzles the human eye.

"*Whose.....sight*"—**Expl.** Melancholy is too dazzlingly bright for human eyes to bear her sight. It is only to make her endurable to the feeble power of vision of men that her face is shaded black, which is the colour associated with wisdom. This is the explanation that the poet gives of the darkness of her complexion.

15. *Weaker*—too weak ; a Latin use of the comparative (absolute comparative).

16 *O'erlaid*—covered with "black hue," so that her brightness may be less dazzling, and strike the eyes not too strongly.

*Slaid*—sober ; grave.

*Wisdom's hue*—Black is the proper colour of grave, sober wisdom. Cf.—Gray's *Hymn to Adversity* "wisdom in sable garb arrayed."

Ll. 17—21. *Black yet etc.*—Though Melancholy is black, yet she is beautiful like Memnon's sister or the Ethiopian queen Cassiopea.

*In esteem*—in the opinion of men.

18. *Prince Memnon's sister*—N. B. The noted fabulous King of Ethiopia, called Memnon, who was said to have assisted the Trojans, and to have been slain by Achilles, was the son of Tithonus and Aurora. Memnon being an Ethiopian was black, yet exceedingly beautiful. And his sister would be presumably more beautiful still.

*Beseem*—befit ; become ; suit.

19. *Starred*—changed into a constellation of stars.

*Starred Ethiop Queen*—Cassiopea who according to the common version of the legend boasted that her daughter Andromeda was more beautiful than the Nereids. But there is also another version of the story which Milton accepts here, according to which, it was her own beauty which she boasted of as excelling that of the Nereids. Whatever it might have been, Neptune, the father of the Nereids, was offended and sent a flood to her country. Finally, she and her daughter were converted into the constellation of stars which bears her name. *Strove*—not simply tried, but contended in rivalry with the Nereids.

Ll. 20—21. *To set.....Sea-Nymphs*—to boast that her beauty was greater than that of the sea-nymphs. *Powers*—divinities.

22. *Thou.....descended*—you are of nobler descent than Prince Memnon's sister or Cassiopea.

Ll. 23—24. Milton makes Melancholy the offspring of chastity (Vesta) and solitude (Saturn).

Vesta in classical mythology is the goddess of the domestic hearth ; "by making her the mother of Melancholy, Milton signifies that *the melancholy of Il Penseroso is not the gloominess of the misanthrope, nor the unhappiness of the man of impure heart, but the contemplative disposition of a pure sympathetic soul.*" Vesta is 'bright hair'd', the brightness of her hair being derived from the blaze of the fire in the hearth.

23. *Long of yore*—a long time ago ; radically Yore—A. S. *geara* 'of years'.

24. *Solitary Saturn*—King of the gods before Jupiter ; he introduced habits of civilization. He is called 'solitary' (1) because he devoured his children and so was left to himself, or (2) because he was dethroned by his sons with Jupiter at their head and that implies an estrangement from his sons, and his rather lonely life.

Milton here implies that Melancholy springs from sedentary habits of life and solitary contemplation. [In Astrology Saturn was supposed to cause melancholy which has given rise to the term *saturnine* applied to gloomy temperaments.]

25. *His daughter she*—Vesta was the daughter of Saturn.

Note that there is no classical authority for making Melancholy the offspring of Saturn and Vesta. Milton, as in the parentage of Mirth, creates his own mythology.

N. B.—Milton assigns the parentage of Melancholy to Vesta, as the goddess of purity and patroness of nuns, and Saturn, the father of that goddess, as the representative of the pensive, or what we call *saturnine*, spirit.

[Mr. Percival notes that Melancholy derives her stay-at-home habits and love for indoor pleasures from her mother (Vesta), the goddess of the hearth. This is a somewhat fanciful suggestion, more ingenious than appropriate.]

Ll. 25—26. *In Saturn's...stain*—This the poet adds by way of apology ; Milton says that in the Golden Age such mixture between father and daughter was not regarded as blameful.

27. *Oft*—often.

*Glimmering*—dimly lighted. It might refer either to the effect of twilight, or to the gloom produced by the thick foliage of the bower. *Glades*—openings in the forest.

28. *Secret shades*—secluded, shady places.

29. *Woody Ida*—A mountain of Crete, where Jupiter was born and brought up. He afterwards made war upon his father; but Milton feigns Vesta, who was the eldest daughter of Saturn devoured his male children as soon as they were born, because he feared they might rebel against him; but from this fate his wife managed to rescue Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto.

30. *Whilst.....Jove*—while there was no fear of Jove troubling him.

Ll. 31—etc. Compare with the slow and solemn movement of these lines the tripping couplets of L'Allegro (ll. 25—34)

31. *Pensive*—thoughtful. *Nun*—a female religious recluse.

*Devout*—pious.

32. *Sober*—self-controlled. *Steadfast*—constant; self possessed.

*Demure*—gravely modest; from Fr. *de meurs* 'of good manners.'

33. *Grain*—dark, purple colour; see Glossary.

34. *Flowing.....train*—trailing magnificently behind you.

35. *Sable*—black.

*Stole*—here hood or veil; properly the flowing garment (*Stola*) formerly worn by Roman ladies.

*Cypress lawn*—linen crape cloth.

Cypress is crape, so called perhaps because first made in the island of Cyprus.

*Lawn*—linen.

36. *Drawn*—thrown over.

*Decent*—graceful; an instance of *Transferred Epithet*—it is the stole that is drawn decently, *i.e.*, gracefully, in a becoming way, over the shoulders.

37. *Keep*—preserve.

*Wonted*—accustomed; usual.

38. *Even*—regular.

*Musing gait*—thoughtful, contemplative manner of walking.

39. *Looks.....skies*—(with) her eyes fixed upon the sky, holding communion with Heaven ; with an enraptured gaze turned towards heaven.

40. *Rapt*—enraptured ; carried away in a trance. *Thy rapt .....eyes*—her eyes are, as it were, a mirror showing an image of her enraptured soul ; her rapt soul is showing itself in her eyes, *i.e.*, her eyes are expressing the divine ecstasy of her soul.

41. *There*—in that position.

*Held.....passion*—held absorbed and motionless in this holy communion with Heaven.

*Passion*—emotion.

*Still*—quiet.

42. *Forget...marble*—be so wrapt up in your own thoughts as to forget everything else around you, and become as a statue ; be so oblivious of all things around you that you seem like a marble statue. What *Percival* says of this line is rather subtle ; he explains '*forget thyself*' as '*forget that you are melancholy, and an inhabitant of earth*', and explains '*to marble*' as '*to be impenetrable to earthly passions*'. But *Milton* makes clearer what he means in the *Epitaph on Shakespeare* :—

"There thou our fancy of itself bereaving,  
Dost make us marble by too much conceiving."

43. *Sad*—serious ; not 'sorrowful'.

*Leaden*—heavy ; downcast ; Cf. *Gray's Hymn to Adversity*  
"Leaden eye that loves the ground—"

44. *As fast*—as steadfastly.

*And looks.....fast*—*Expl.* *Il Penseroso* in his welcome to *Melancholy* prays her to come with her eyes fixed to the sky as if holding communion with Heaven. As her soul is filled with divine ecstasy, it shines out through her eyes. She stands still and motionless, in holy transport, and seems to forget everything around, so rapt is she in her thoughts and to become as a statue, till ere while, she cast down her grave, steadfast eyes and fixes them as firmly on the earth as they were previously fixed upon the sky.

**N.B.**—The sad downward cast of the eyes is here designed to imply reflection on the insufficiency of worldly, in contrast with spiritual good.

Ll. 45—55. *The poet speaks of Melancholy's companions.*

*Spare Fast*—Temperance ; the spirit of abstemiousness.

*That oft.....diet*—Temperance is spoken of as holding feast with the gods ; this means that it is the temperate man who is admitted into the companionship of gods. The idea is that the practice of *temperance* prepares the mind for serious contemplation and high thoughts ; that is why high thinking goes with plain living.

*And hears.....sing*—**Expl.** The muses are the goddesses of poetry. Milton says here that spare fast hears the goddesses of poetry sing forming a circle before the altar of Jupiter ; *i.e.*, it is the temperate man who is fit to hear divine music, and to write the highest kind of poetry.

*Aye*—always.

49. *Add to these*—bring among your other attendants.

*Retired Leisure*—leisurely retirement.

50. Leisure takes his pleasure, in gardens, but the gardens must be *trim* *i.e.*, neatly kept ; this is in accordance with the mood of the pensive man who is pleased with order and decency.

[The word 'trim' appropriately describes the Italian garden of Milton's time with its cutting and clipping of plants and its ordered arrangements.]

Ll. 51—54. *But, first.....contemplation*—**Expl.** But above all bring with you the golden-winged Cherub, Contemplation, who guides the fiery throne of God through the sky.

51. *Chiefest*—Melancholy has chief attendant in Contemplation as Mirth has in Liberty.

52. *Him*—the Cherub Contemplation.

*Soars*—rises from earth to heaven.

The imagery of this passage is taken from the vision of Ezekiel in the Bible where the sapphire throne of God is described as having four cherubs for four wheels ; Milton by a daring stroke of imagination names one of these cherubs Contemplation—implying that it is by contemplation that we attain the supreme knowledge of divine things.

54. *Cherub*—According to mediaeval theology the Cherubs were the angels of knowledge as the Seraphs were of love. Hence *Contemplation which is an intellectual function is properly called a cherub*.

55. *Hist*—summon as in a whisper ; bid her come with you, by the signal she is wont to obey. *Hist* means *listen* or *be quiet* ; and Milton here very expressively uses a word which bids *sound* to be absent, as if it summoned *silence* to be present.

56. '*Less*—unless.

*Philomel*—the nightingale. The legendary Philomela was the daughter of King Pandion ; being pursued in vengeance by her brother-in law Tereus, she was changed at her own request into a nightingale. [It is a poetic tradition that it is the female bird that sings whereas in reality it is the male that does so.]

*Deign a song*—grant a song ; condescend to sing *once*.

57. *Plight*—mood ; manner. *Sweetest saddest*—"our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts."

58. *Smoothing.....Night*—smoothing, softening the frowning aspect of night ; the bird sings so sweetly that even night herself is pleased and relaxes her grimness. A similar effect of music is described in *Comus*—1. 251 :

"Smoothing the raven down  
Of darkness till it smiled."

*Rugged*—wrinkled ; stern.

59. *Cynthia*—the moon ; so called because she was born on the Mount Cynthus in Delos.

*Checks.....yoke*—stops the dragons that draw her chariot. Strictly, however, it was the chariot of Ceres, the goddess of corn, and not that of Cynthia, that was drawn by dragons ; Cynthia had her chariot drawn by stags. Like Milton, Shakespeare also represents the chariot of Night as drawn by dragons—

"Swift, swift, ye dragons of the night"  
—*Cymbeline*.

*Dragon yoke*—the dragons yoked to her chariot.

60. *Accustomed oak*—refers perhaps to some local oak where the nightingale generally used to sing ; there is in all



probability a touch of local colouring here. The poet has in mind some particular oak where he had often heard the nightingale sing.

Note also that the pensive man wishes to hear the plaintive nightingale in the night whereas L'Allegro wishes to hear the joyous lark in the morning (142).

*And.....oak—Expl.* In speaking of his evening pleasures, the poet says that he would like to have around him complete silence, unless it be broken only by the sweet and plaintive song of the nightingale; but the bird is to sing so sweetly that night will be pleased to hear her song, and relax her habitual grim aspect, and the moon also will seem to stand still above the oak on which the bird usually sings, as if to listen to the music.

Ll. 61—72. *The poet addresses the nightingale*—The nightingale is spoken of as shunning "the noise of folly" because (i) its song is plaintive and (2) because it is a shy bird and loves to live in solitary and retired shades; hence perhaps the poet means that the nightingale by her love of retirement seems to care least for noisy mirth. [*Noise of folly*—This may be taken to refer to revelry or to the music of foolish singers. *Noise* in Elizabethan English often means music.]

62. *Most musical, most melancholy*—The nightingale's song is at once sweet and sad.

**N.B.**—There may be an allusion here to the story of Philomela—how Tereus, the husband of her sister Procne, contrived to marry her by telling her that Procne was dead, and then subsequently robbed her of her tongue, and how Procne, killed her own son Itys and served up the flesh of the child in a dish before Tereus, and then both the sisters fled, pursued by Tereus with an axe until Procne was changed into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale; hence the sadness of the nightingale's song.

63. *Chauntress*—the feminine of chaunter, one who chants or sings.

64. *Woo*—seek or court you. *To hear*—so that I may hear.

65. *Missing thee*—if I miss (*i.e.*, cannot hear) your song.

*Unseen*—With this word contrast "not unseen" in L'Allegro (l. 57). The pensive man does not like human company whereas the cheerful man likes it.

66. *Smooth-shaven*—mown smoothly.

*Green*—green field.

67. *Wandering moon*—The moon is so called because her apparent path in the sky is very irregular; she is always moving in and out among the clouds. [The fine epithet 'wandering' as applied to the moon is frequent in Latin poetry.]

68. *Riding.....noon*—ascending the zenith. 'Highest noon' is best interpreted as the highest point the moon reaches in the sky—the zenith. Some interpret 'highest noon' as indicating that the moon is nearly full.

69. *That.....astray*—that has lost its path; the moon seems to wander aimlessly among the clouds.

70. *Heaven's wide.....way*—the boundless expanse of the sky.

Ll. 71—72. Refers to "a familiar optical illusion, by which as the clouds pass over the moon, it seems to be she, not they that is in motion."—*Keightley*.

*Bowed*—dived down. *Stooping*—bending low. *Fleecy cloud*—a white mass of clouds.

73. *Plat*—plot. *Rising ground*—perhaps some hillock.

74. *Far-off curfew sound*—the evening bell as it tolls from some distant Church. The curfew bell was originally intended as a signal for putting out lights in the night; gradually it came to be the evening bell. See Glossary.

75. *Some*—This word 'some' plainly hints that Milton is here describing an ideal scene, and not an actual one.

*Wide-watered shore*—the coast of some wide 'water,' either sea or river. Some commentators have supposed that there is a local touch here, and that Milton means the Thames.

76. *Swinging*—oscillating. It refers to the movement of the bell. Mark how the alliteration in 'swinging,' 'slow' and 'solemn' in this line and the slow cadence exactly echo the sense. Do these adjectives qualify 'curfew sound'? It is best to suppose that it is the curfew bell coming over some wide water that sounds "swinging slow with solemn roar."

But some commentators have supposed that "wide water" (l. 75) refers to a sea and that the clause "swinging slow.....roar" is a description of the sound of the sea. But 'wide

water' does not refer definitely to a sea : it may mean some river or lake ; hence it is best to take the first explanation.

77. *If the air.....permit*—if the weather does not allow me to stay out.

78. *Still*—quiet.

*Removed*—retired.

*Will fit*—will suit my mood.

79. *Glowing embers*—the cinders slowly burning.

80. *Teach.....gloom*—make light imitate darkness ; because the faint light emitted by the embers instead of removing darkness, only serves to make it more palpable, the light is so faint that it is almost like darkness.

*Or, if the air.....gloom*—**Expl.** The Pensive man, if he cannot have an outing because of bad weather, will prefer a retired place dimly lighted by glowing embers. He will not much mind staying indoors, if the weather is not favourable ; he will then do this—he will sit in a quiet, retired room in which the flickering light cast by the fire in the hearth will be more like darkness than light. The semi-darkness of the room is congenial to the mood of the Pensive man (Il Penseroso).

81. *Resort*—haunt of mirth and festivity. *Far...mirth*—far removed from the haunt or scene of mirth, hence at a place where the sound of mirth or festivity cannot reach him.

82. *Save*—except. *Hearth*—fireside.

Ll. 83—84. The bellman, as he went his round from door to door was formerly accustomed to utter spells (charms) to protect the house, to tell the hours and to report on the weather. His voice is here called drowsy as he feels sleepy. Verity quotes the following passage from Herrick's *Hesperides* which gives us an idea of what a bellman's charms were :—

"From noise of Scare-fires rest ye free,

From Murders Benedicite.

From all mischances, that may fright

Your pleasing slumbers in the night :

Mercie secure ye all, and keep

The Goblin from ye, while ye sleep.

Past one a clock, and almost two,

My masters all, Good day to you."

*Nightly harm*—perils of the night.

85. *Il Penseroso describes his midnight studies.*

86. *Seen—i.e., seen by people outside. High—elevated.*

87. *The Bear*—the Great Bear, a well-known constellation of stars.

*Outwatch the Bear*—In the latitudes of England, the Great Bear does not go below the horizon ; it never 'sets' but is only hidden from view at daybreak by the morning-night. Therefore this phrase 'outwatch the Bear' means I shall study till daybreak ; I shall study the whole night.

88. *With thrice great Hermes*—studying the philosophical works attributed to Hermes, the Egyptian who was renowned (1) as a king, (2) as a priest and (3) as a philosopher. Hence he is called thrice great or Trismegistus.

*Unsphere*—bring down from the sphere where his soul dwells. According to Plato the souls of dead men inhabited the spheres or the heavenly bodies. Milton is very fond of this idea. Cf. *Comus*, 2—3 "... where those immortal shapes of bright aerial spirits live *insphered*."

*N. B.*—Holding communion with the mind of Plato, by reading his works, is here regarded as calling his spirit from its sphere to impart knowledge such as is contained in his *Phaedo*, etc., respecting the regions of the blessed, etc.

*Plato*—the great Greek philosopher.

*Unsphere.....Plato*—study the works of Plato.

*Unfold*—disclose.

Ll 90—92. *What.....nook*—The simple meaning of this passage is—"to disclose where the spirit of men dwell after death."

*Immortal mind*—the soul which never dies. *That hath.....nook*—that has abandoned her temporary dwelling place in this human body

*Fleshly nook*—narrow prison of the body.

93. *Demons*—spirits. It was an ancient belief that the four elements, fire, water, air and earth were inhabited by spirits—The spirit of fire was Salamander, that of air was Sylph, that of water was Nymph, that of underground was Gnome.

Ll. 95—96. *Whose power...element*—It was further supposed that these demons had sympathetic affinity with the elements

and with the planets, *i.e.*, they presided over different elements and different planets. The books of Plato which deal with these subjects and which Milton had in mind when he wrote these lines are the *Timæus*, *Critias*, *Phædo*, etc.

Ll. 87—96. *I may oft...element*—**Expl.** The poet here describes the greatest of his enjoyments—midnight-study of philosophy in some lonely tower. He says that he will study Hermes till daybreak ; and he will study Plato to learn about the existence of dead men's souls and the demons that live in the elements and have sympathetic relation with them and with planets. The pensive man is particularly interested in those writings of Plato, which deal with the regions of the blessed and the spirits presiding over elements and planets ; in other words, he is more interested in things of the other world than in things of world.

Ll. 97—102. With Il Penseroso's *study of tragedy* compare L'Allegro's preference of *comedy*. (Ll. 132—135).

97. *Gorgeous*—refers to the costume and scenery of a tragedy, "sceptered pall" of the next line.

98. *Sceptred pall*—royal dress ; with the pall and the sceptre. In Greek tragedies the Kings and Queens wore a flowing garment called 'pall' (Roman 'palla'). The 'sceptre' is the symbol of royal authority.

*Comes sweeping by*—Perhaps it refers to the majestic dignity of actors in a tragedy.

99. *Presenting Thebes etc.*—representing etc. ; embodying the themes and stories of Thebes, etc.

*Thebes*—The fortunes of Œdipus, the king of Thebes, have been presented by the Greek dramatists Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The *Seven against Thebes* of Æschylus, the *Œdipus Rex* and *Antigone* of Sophocles and the *Bacchæ* of Euripides draw their themes from the history of Thebes.

*Pelops' line*—the dynasty of Pelops, who exercised such great influence in the southern peninsula of Greece that it came to be known after him 'as the island of Pelops' ; some of the descendants of Pelops were Agamemnon, Orestes and Electra ; the chief plays which deal with the story of Pelops's descendants are the trilogy of *Oresteia* by Æschylus,

the *Electra* of Sophocles and the *Electra* and other plays of Euripides.

*Troy*—Episodes of the Trojan war have supplied material to the great Greek dramatists Sophocles and Euripides, e.g., in the *Hecuba* and *Troades*. Troy is called 'divine' as there was a tradition that it was built by the gods.

L1. 101—102. Besides the above ancient classical tragedies II Penseroso wishes also to read the masterpieces of modern tragedy. *Or what.....stage*—or whatever subject of a later time has done honour to the tragic stage though such representations have been rare.

*Though rare*—N. B. Milton is evidently thinking of the tragedies of Shakespeare. With the exception of the tragedies of Shakespeare there was hardly any worth attention; that is why Milton says that lately tragedies of the right type had been so rare. Milton cannot mean here the classical tragedies of Ben Jonson; he has already shown his admiration of Shakespeare's genius in *L'Allegro*; here he conveys again a silent tribute to Shakespeare's mastery of tragedy.

*Buskined stage*—the tragic drama. The 'buskin' is the high-heeled boot worn by an actor in a tragedy.

*Ennobled...stage*—has glorified the tragic stage.

*Sometimes let.....stage Expl.* The Pensive Man is not indifferent to dramatic productions, but unlike the Cheerful Man he prefers the tragedies—specially the Greek tragedies with their sublime themes. He imagines that he witnesses the performances of those tragedies, and is impressed by the splendour of costume (hence *gorgeous* tragedy) and by the majestic dignity of kings figuring in the tragedy (hence *sceptred pall*). Then again he specifically mentions the tragedies or the themes of the tragedies in which he takes the greatest interest, viz., those dealing with the fortunes of Thebes, or with the woes of the descendants of Pelops, and the calamities of Troy. He is also interested in later tragic dramas, which are so few in number. He not only delights in the Greek tragedies of old, but is also ready to read any tragic drama of quality, lately produced.

L1. 103--108. The poet expresses a desire that the great poems which have perished could be recovered so that he might read them. He wishes that the souls of some great poets who

are dead might come back and complete their half-finished poems or replace those that had been lost. He wants to re-invoke the spirits of Musæus and Orpheus to hear their poetry and music, and the spirit of Chaucer to finish his *Squire's Tales*.

103. *Sad Virgin*—The goddess Melancholy is referred to. (Cf.—'pensive nun').

104. *Musæus*—a half-mythical personage; supposed to be the son of Orpheus and a great lyric poet and musician.

*Bower*—his happy abode in Elysium where he dwells after death.

105. *Orpheus*—the greatest Greek musician; by the power of music he charmed Pluto and obtained from him permission to bring back his dead wife to earth.

106. *Warbled*—sung.

*To the string*—to the accompaniment of his lyre.

107. *Iron tears*—tears from the iron-hearted, or stern Pluto. 'Iron' is an instance of transferred epithet.

108. *Made...seek*—made Pluto give back to him (Orpheus) his wife Eurydice whom he had sought for in Hell.

109. *Him*—i.e., Chaucer, who has left his *Squire's Tale* unfinished.

*Half-told*—unfinished.

110. *The story of Cambuscan*—In Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* Cambuscan is Chengizkhan, the great Tartar Conqueror.

111. *Camball and Algarsife*—were the sons of Cambuscan and brothers of *Canace* (his daughter). The *ring* gave its wearer the power of understanding the language of birds; the *glass* gave the owner knowledge of the future; the *horse of brass* could carry its rider anywhere he wished.

"This noble king, this Tartar *Cambuscan*,  
Had two sonnes by Elfeta his wite,  
Of which the eldest son hight *Algarsife*,  
That other was y cleped *Camballo*.  
A daughter had this worthy king also,  
That youngest was, and highte *Canace*"

—Chaucer's '*Squire's Tale*'.

Spenser finishes the story; Camball vows that the suitor of Canace must vanquish him in fight to get the hand of his sister. Triamond, a suitor of Canace, defeats Camball and marries Canace.

112. *Who had*—Supply "of one." *To wife*—as a wife.

*And who had*.....*wife*—and of him who own Canace as his bride.

N. B.—Camballo is one of the two brothers of Canace, and someone who was to win Canace by fighting with her two brothers is called, by mistake, Camballo in the *Squire's Tale*.

113. *Virtuous*—of great virtue or efficacy; possessing magical quality. The virtuous ring and glass were sent as presents by the king of Araby and Ind.

*Or call up him*.....*did ride*—Expl. The Pensive Man wishes that the spirit of Chaucer could be recalled to finish the *Squire's Tale*, which he had left incomplete. He is interested in Cambuscan, a king who dwelt at Sarray, in the land of Tartary, and in his two sons Algarsife and Camballo, and in his daughter Canace who possessed the magic ring and glass; and he is willing to hear all about them and also about the horse of brass which was presented to Cambuscan by the king of Araby and Ind. The Pensive Man knows only part of the story as related by Chaucer; he wishes that Chaucer could come back to relate the whole of it.

Ll. 116—120. The Pensive Man wishes to read other kinds of poetry, *viz.*, the allegorical poetry of Chivalry and Romance by poets like Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser.

116. *Aught*—anything.

*Beside*—in addition to those already mentioned, *e.g.*, Chaucer Orpheus and Musæus. *Bards*—poets.

N. B.—Such poets as Spenser, Tasso and Ariosto, are here intended; they profess to give moral instruction under the veil of romantic fictions, for which reason, Milton says that in their poetry 'more is meant than meets the ear' (*i.e.*, in their poetry there is a hidden moral meaning in addition to the ordinary meaning).

117. *Sage*—wise.

*Solemn*—dignified; serious.

*Tunes*—verse.



118. *Turneys*—tourneys; tournaments.

*Trophies hung*—arms or banners won in a fight and hung up on the wall as a sign of victory. It clearly refers to the poetry of Chivalry like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

119. *Forests.....drear*—It refers to the poetry of Romance, e.g., Tasso's *Enchanted Forest*.

*Drear*—dreadful.

120. *Where.....ear*—where there is a deeper meaning over and above the plain, obvious meaning; where there is an underlying Allegory or Moral meaning; for instance, the *Faerie Queene* is a deep moral and spiritual allegory.

*And if aught else.....ear*—**Expl.** The tragedies, both ancient and modern, do not exhaust all the interest of the Pensive Man. He delights also in poetry and romances, written with a serious purpose; so he will read all that has been written by such poets as Spenser, Tasso and Ariosto—he will read all about tournaments, arms or banners won in battle and hung up as trophies, or all that has been written about forests and magic art—poems and romances in which there is a serious moral purpose set forth in the form of a story.

121. *Pale*—as compared with the rosy dawn. *Career*—progress til daybreak.

122. *Civil-suited*—wearing the dress of a simple citizen's wife. Pensive Man is a lover of soft, mellow colours and hence he does not wish for gaudy morning; but wishes the morning to come soberly dressed like a simple citizen's wife. Compare with this passage ll 61—63 of *L'Allegro* where the glorious sun rises like a king robed in bright rays with his courtiers, the clouds, in many colours, in attendance on him.

123. *Trick't*—wearing showy dress; richly-adorned. *Cf.*—*Lycidas*, l. 170, where the sun is said "to *trick* his beams".

*Frounc't*—having her hair finely curled. Literally, 'frounc't' means 'wrinkled', hence 'curled'.

*As.....wont*—as was usual with her.

124. *Attic boy*—the Athenian youth Cephalus loved by Dawn in Greek Mythology.

**"Thus.....hunt"—Expl.** Having passed the night in various studies, the Pensive Man wishes the Dawn to come in the simple sober dress of a homely citizen's wife; he wishes that she must have nothing of her showy dress or fine curls which she used to wear when she went out hunting with her lover, the Athenian youth Cephalus.

125. *Kerchief*—having the head covered; see Glossary.

*Comely*—becoming; the morning should not be very bright, it should be a little cloudy; the morning shall have her head covered with a cloud like a veil.

126. *Rocking*—swaying the trees to and fro.

*Piping*—whistling.

127. *Ushered*—introduced; there should be a quiet shower before it is morning.

*A shower still*—a quiet shower (unaccompanied by winds).

'Usher' (O. Fr. *ussier*) properly meant a door-keeper; thence it was applied to a servant who went before some great man in a procession. Hence it has come to be used as a verb meaning 'to introduce.'

Ll. 128—129. *When...leaves*—When the wind has spent its force, it *only* makes a low, rustling sound among the leaves of trees.

128. *His*—its (neuter). The word 'its' was a new one in Milton's time and is only used thrice in the whole body of his poetry.

130. *Minute drops*—drops falling slowly at regular intervals of about a minute.

*Or ushered.....eaves*—**Expl.** Let there be a quiet or gentle shower when the wind has ceased, ending with drops falling at short intervals from off the eaves on the rustling leaves. *Eaves*—the edge of the roof that projects out of the wall.

132. *Flaring*—dazzling. (The Pensive Man does not like the glare of light. He prefers the gloom of the woods).

133. *Arched walks*—the avenue of trees, their branches joining at the top and forming arches as it were; covered passage

*Twilight*—only dimly lighted, the rays of the sun not being able to enter boldly the groves.

134. *Brown*—in the old sense 'deep black'. Verity quotes *Paradise Lost*, 1087–88, "umbrage broad and *brown* as evening."

134. *Sylvan*—Sylvanus, the god of woods, in Roman Mythology.

135. *Monumental*—The oak being very old is like a memorial of days long gone by. *Monumental*—'memorial', 'old' (*Masson*). Pattison in a fine and illuminating passage has supported this interpretation. [Another and a very prosaic interpretation would be to suggest that the oak is 'monumental' because in churches, monuments are made of oak.]

136. *Heaved*—uplifted; a transferred epithet properly applied to the axe because it is the axe that is uplifted; so also 'rude' applies to 'stroke' and not to 'axe'.

Ll. 136–138 "*Where...haunt*"—where the uplifted axe was never heard (to hew the woods) and to frighten the nymphs out of their dwelling, *i. e.*, the wood was so retired that it was never visited even by wood-cutters.

137. *Daunt*—frighten.

138. *Hallowed*—consecrated. *Haunt*—abode.

139. *Close covert*—a secret, sheltered place.

140. *Where.....look*—where there will be no intruder.

*Profaner*—Latin use of the comparative—too profane, unsympathetic. Radically it comes from Lat. *pro* (before, outside) and *fanum* (a temple), at first denoting the uninitiated people who were not allowed to enter inside a temple. Hence it came to mean 'not sacred' and 'impure'; here it means '*unsympathetic*'.

141. *Day's garish eye*—the glaring sun.

*Garish*—staring; very dazzling.

142. *Honeyed thigh*—carrying honey in its thigh; Percival points out that bees carry honey, or more accurately, pollen dust, in a cup-shaped depression in the joints of their hindmost legs.

143. *Flowery work*—work of gathering honey from flowers.

145. *Consort*—the harmony that they produce by their musical sounds.

*With such consort.....keep*—with such music as they (the waters) make.

146. *Dewy feathered sleep*—A beautiful epithet being a poem in miniature. It may be taken as 'sleep with dewy feathers' or 'feathered and dewy sleep.' Cool, soft, refreshing sleep is meant.

146. *Entice.....Sleep*—induce soft refreshing sleep to come to my eyelids. In classical mythology Morpheus, the God of sleep, was represented as winged and here Milton supposes that his wings are moist with cool and refreshing dew.

148. *Wave.....wings*—'Wave' should be taken with 'in airy stream'; the word implying *movement*.

149. *Lively*—vivid, life-like.

*Lively portraiture*—The dream consists of a series of life-like pictures.

*Displayed*—unfolded.

*And let.....laid*—Expl. The Pensive Man desires to have a strange dream in his mid-day nap in a shady bower. He wishes that a strange, mysterious dream *wave* (move to and fro) at *his* (sleep's) wings *displayed* (unfolded) in an airy stream of *lively* (vivid) portraiture and (be) laid softly on his eyelids.

Dreams are generally poetically called the messengers of Morpheus, the God of Sleep. Here the dream is represented as being borne on the wings of Sleep. It is said to *wave*, i.e., move to and fro, hover with undulating motion because of the shifting, changeful character of dreams.

The dream is "*displayed in an airy stream of lively portraiture*"—i.e., the imagery which comes with the dream is conceived of as a series of life like, vivid pictures streaming in the air. [Another interpretation of "airy" is 'unsubstantial'; but though dreams are really unsubstantial, yet they do not appear so to the dreamer; on the other hand they then appear as real and 'lively.']

The dream is laid softly on the eyelids, i.e., the dream visits the eyelids softly.

151. *Breathe*—Let sweet music breathe; optative mood.

153. *To mortals good*—good or kind to mortals.

154. *Unseen.....wood*—the invisible guardian deity of the wood.

Ll. 155—158. *Let.....roof*—the poet expresses a wish to visit the studious cloister.

Ll. 155—156. *Let.....pale*—Let me never fail in my duty of visiting some place devoted to study—some college-cloister.

155. *Dut*—dutiful.

156. *Pale*—enclosure (etymologically a place shut by pales or wooden stakes).

*Cloister*—A covered arcade forming part of a church or college; the word 'studious' shows that Milton means a college here. He might have Christ's College (his own college) in mind when he wrote this line.

157. *Love.....roof*—(Let me never fail to) love. Here, the poet means a church. He might have old St. Paul's Cathedral or even Westminster Abbey in mind. [Milton as a boy was a scholar at St. Paul's School.]

*Embowed*—arched; high-vaulted as in Gothic Architecture.

158. *Antique*—(1) 'Ancient' without any notion of 'fantastic' or 'grotesque'.

(2) Or 'peculiarly decorated or ornamented'.

The word was often used in this sense as in *Hamlet*, "His antic sword"—sword with peculiar designs on the hilt and blade.

*Massy-proof*—"proof against the great weight of the stone-roof because they are *massive*." It has been interpreted by some as 'proof against the mass they bear'.

159. *Storied*—stained-glass windows with scriptural stories painted on them.

*Dight*—ornamented; adorned.

160. *Dim religious light*—dim light proper for a place devoted to religious worship. The light comes soft and mellowed through the painted window.

161. *Pealing organ*—loud-sounding organ. [The organ was Milton's favourite instrument; and music to him was a necessary part of a man's education, and of his secular and religious life.]

Note that Il Penseroso loves *sacred music* and L'Allegro loves *soft Lydian airs*.

162. *Full voiced quire*—the full company (or chorus) of the band of singers (quire).

*Quire*—See Glossary.

*Below*—"below the organ which was placed on a comparatively high place." •

163. *Service high*—divine service with music (Cf. Roman Catholic '*high mass*' which means divine worship accompanied by sacred music).

*Anthems*—songs of praise to God. It comes from Lat. *antifona* meaning "a composition sung responsively by two or more choirs of voice". Later it came to be restricted to mean 'religious songs'.

*Clear*—clearly sung; it may also mean 'lofty', 'noble', "Fame is the spur that the *clear* spirit doth raise"—*Lycidas*.

164. *Through mine ear*—i.e., entering through mine ear.

*As*—such as.

165. *Dissolve...ecstasies*—make me rapt in holy joy; so touch my soul as to lift me out of my-self. 'Ecstasies' will generally suggest being taken out of one's self—a trance like state.

166. *Bring...eyes*—will give me visions of Paradise; will give me a foretaste of all that heavenly life implies; will reveal the glory of heaven to me.

*There let the pealing organ.....mine eyes*—**Expl.** The Pensive Man is not averse to the music of the church-organ. He prefers sacred music, and not the soft, Lydian airs that specially appeal to L'Allegro. The Pensive Man wishes to hear the solemn music of the organ, accompanying the voices of the band of singers known as the *quire*, when divine service is held with the singing of hymns. What will be the effect of this music on the Pensive Man? It will touch his soul into an exquisite sense of bliss, and will reveal to him the glory of heaven.

**N.B.**—*Milton's love of church music* indicates that he is not yet a Puritan in the strict sense of the term. It may be also observed that in after life the poetic spirit of Milton did not fail to love things themselves which he here commends.

although his Puritan spirit made him averse to them on account of circumstances with which they were connected.

Ll. 167—168. *May I in my weary age find out etc.*

[It is something in the nature of a *prophecy*, unconscious though it may be. Milton himself had a weary old age.]

168. *Peaceful hermitage*—the quiet abode of a hermit.

169. *Hairy gown*—coarse, hairy garment worn as a sign of repentance, and of renunciation of physical comforts. In the Bible we read about the hairy garment worn by Elijah and John the Baptist.

170. *Sit*—i.e., enjoy leisure.

*Spell*—study; the word implies that the knowledge is acquired slowly and with labour.

171. *Of every star...shew*—i.e., study Astronomy.

172. *And every herb...dew*—i.e., study Botany.

Ll. 173—174 *Till...strain*—till old and experienced, I may speak with the authority of a prophet—till my experience gives me *vision* and *insight*. [One commentator suggests that foreseeing the future refers to foreseeing Life in the Next World. If Penseroso looks hopefully to the life after death. We find no such thing in L'Allegro.)

174. *Strain*—utterance.

Ll. 175—176 These lines have been contrasted with the closing couplet of L'Allegro (ll. 151—152). The construction of the latter is subjunctive—"These delights, *if thou canst give*"—implying a sort of doubt while that of the former is imperative implying a sort of certainty and eagerness on the part of the poet. From this it has been argued that *Milton prefers the Il Penseroso mood*.

---

## GLOSSARY

### A

*Antique* (II, 158)—[Lat. *antiquus*] (1) old, later; (2) old-fashioned, and (3) hence fantastic. But the third meaning has now been taken by the word 'antic.'

### B

*Buxom* (I, 24)—from A.S. *bugan*, to bow, originally flexible, bending; thence it came to mean 'obedient,' hence 'good-natured,' and finally 'handsome.'

*Bested* (II, 3)—help, avail.

*Brooding* (I, 6)—The primary sense of the term, is to sit like a bird upon eggs; so a person is said to brood over some thought.

*Bower* (I, 87)—chamber from A. S. *bur*; originally this term was applied to ladies' apartments in a house, and the room set apart for men was called "hall." Thus 'hall and bower' is a common combination in English poetry.

### C

*Cranks* (I, 27)—turns of wit. Literally, 'crank' means a crook or bend; an iron-rod bent like a right angle is called a crank in machinery. Hence metaphorically 'crank' is applied to a word in which the sense is twisted from the right one.

*Curfew* (II, 74)—from Fr. *couvre* (cover) and *feu* (fire)= the time for putting out fires, at first about 9 o'clock in the night; then the term came to denote evening.

*Cypress lawn* (II, 35)—linen crape cloth.

### D

*Debonair* (I, 24)—elegant; it is the Fr. phrase *de bon aire*, literally 'of a good manner'.

*Dappled* (I, 44)—having the sky covered with small clouds; literally it means 'marked with small dips or hollows'.

*Dight* (I, 62)—adorned (A. S. *dihtan*).

*Demure*—modest.



## F

*Forlorn* (I, 3)—here 'desolate,' the p.p. of the A. S. verb 'for-leosan' to lose utterly. The prefix 'for' has an intensive force.

'*Frounc't* (II, 123)—with hair curled. Originally meant 'wrinkled.'

*Fallow* (I, 71)—literally means 'pale-coloured', *i.e.*, yellowish; hence it was applied to a ploughed field without crop growing; thence it came to be applied to uncultivated land.

*Fond* (II, 6)—foolish; the p. p. of the A. S. verb 'fonnen, to be foolish.

## G

*Gram* (II, 32)—purple colour; originally this word denoted 'a small seed,' thence was applied to any small thing: thus it was used of the small cochineal insects from whose bodies scarlet dyes were prepared. Finally, it came to be applied to the dyes thus obtained and denoted 'dark purple.'

*Garish* (II, 141)—staring, flaunting; something that makes you stare or gaze (cognate with *garish*).

## I

*Influence* (I, 122)—An astrological term literally meaning "a flowing-in", originally applied to the power or virtue that was supposed to flow in from the heavenly bodies; it was supposed that human destiny was determined by the aspects of the heavenly bodies.

## J

*Junkets* (I, 102)—dainties: originally meaning "a kind of cream cheese served up on rushes."

## K

*Kercheft* (II, 125)—having the head covered; from Fr. *couvre-chef* 'head-cover.'

## L

*Livery* (I, 62)—(French *livree*) originally anything *delivered* or served out, whether clothes, food or money; now meaning dress (of servants).

*Landskip* (I, 70)—landscape; from A. S. *landscipe* = "land-shape"—the appearance of a plot of ground. The A. S. suffix *scipe* = modern "ship" (friendship, worship).

*Lubber* (I, 110) awkward; clumsy.

## P

*Pall* (II, 98)—long cloak.

## Q

*Quip* (I, 27)—sharp, witty turn of speech: *quibble* is its diminutive.

*Quire* (II, 162)—a band of singers; the same as 'choir' (Lat. *chorus*).

## R

*Russet* (I, 71)—from O. Fr. *rousset* meaning 'reddish' or 'reddish-brown.' But here it means 'grey' as Shakespeare uses it in *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc i, l. 166 "the morn in *russet* mantle clad."

## S

*Secure* (I, 91)—free from care (Lat. *securus*) hence here it means *without anxiety*.

*Stole* (II, 35)—here means the veil or hood (Lat. *stola*) worn by Roman ladies.

## T

*Toys* (II, 4)—trivialities.

## U

*Uncouth* (I, 5)—strange, fantastic; originally it meant 'unknown': A.S. *un* (not) and *cuth*, the p.p. of A.S. *cunnan* (to know).

## V

*Virtuous*—of great virtue; *virtue*—efficacy or power.

## W

*Weeds* (I, 120)—garments; now used only in the expression "widow's weeds."

## Y

*Y-clept* [ycleap'd] (I, 12)—called; Y, 'ge' the A.S. prefix for the past participle and 'clept' from A. S. *'clifian'* to call.

### Questions and Answers.

*Q. 1. What are the exact meanings of the expressions "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" ? Does Milton use them rightly ? (C. U. 1888).*

*Ans. 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' are Italian expressions and are equivalent in English to "the cheerful man" and "the thoughtful man."*

L'Allegro comes from Italian 'alacer' meaning 'alacrity' or 'briskness' and as the title implies, there is an air of briskness pervading the whole poem ; the metre has a rapid and tripping movement throughout ; there are, moreover, many words denoting haste and rapid action—'*Haste* thee nymph' (l, 25) ; '*Come and trip it*' (l, 33) ; '*In haste* her bower she leaves' (l, 87) ; '*Out-of-doors* he flings' (l, 183). The poem is also full of sound from morning to evening—the song of the lark, the merry bells and rebecks of the harlots, the bustle of tournaments, pageants, 'the well-trod stage', and the jayous Lydian music.

Milton chose the Italian title *L'Allegro* on purpose because the corresponding English word 'Mirth' would have been liable to misconception ; the word 'Mirth' would have given rise to the associations of triviality and sensuality ; but *L'Allegro* is never frivolous or gross. His mirth is unrestrained ("iree" l, 40) but at the same time innocent and chaste ("unreproved"). His is a child-like delight in life and nature ; his impressions are those of a pure and lively student open to all the influences of natural and domestic sights and sounds.

Similarly Milton chose the Italian title *Il Penseroso* to avoid all the associations of sullenness or gloominess and ill humour which attend the corresponding English word 'Melancholy'. 'Melancholy' or blackbills in Milton's time was used to denote depression of spirits. But *Il Penseroso* is never gloomy, never depressed. He is self possessed and contemplative, musing on the grave and serious aspects of life and nature, as *L'Allegro* delights in their lighter aspects. He is fully sensitive to the joys of nature and life ; only he takes them in a tranquil and sober way. Thus he is a lover of shades and soft colours, of subdued sounds, and likes to live in solitary study and contemplation.

But this title is, however, not very happily chosen ; because there is no such word as *Penseroso* in Italian ; the proper word should be "*Penseroso*", and moreover '*penseroso*' does not avoid

associations of ill-humour as it means 'anxious' or 'full of care' but Milton had to choose this title because it was the nearest equivalent word which could convey his idea. [For a different view which maintains that Milton was correct in the use of his titles, see *Introduction*.]

Q. 2. *Is there any personal element in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso? Or, point out how far these poems are a picture of the poet's mind?* (C. U. 1915).

Ans. *The two poems are lyrics in which the poet sets forth two opposite moods of his own mind,—(1) the light, and (2) the serious,—the joyous-emotional and the contemplative. L'Allegro stands for the lighter mood, he takes delight in life and Nature; Il Penseroso is contemplative, he muses on the serious aspects of life and Nature.*

Milton lived about a time when the impulse given by the great Renaissance movement had been exhausted and the reaction had already begun in the rise of the critical spirit in literature. People had no more of the unbounded enthusiasm and activity of the Elizabethans nor had they their heart-felt joy in life and Nature; they consequently either plunged into gross sensuality or sought refuge in a stern, uncompromising type of morality and religion. A great poet like Milton could not but catch something of the enthusiasm and joy of the Renaissance. This is seen in *L'Allegro*; there the cheerful man is full of pure enjoyment of life and Nature; he takes delight in the lovely sights and sounds of Nature and in the merry company of men. He is what the spirit of joyful youth will make one; *the poem (L'Allegro) itself is the outcome of the Renaissance spirit working in Milton.*

On the other hand *Il Penseroso* with his love of grave contemplation foreshadows the coming Puritanism in Milton. If *L'Allegro* is a Cavalier purged of his grossness and sensuality, *Il Penseroso* is a Puritan purged of his bigotry and stiffness. Living in the age of Puritanism Milton was a Puritan himself; but as these poems were composed at a comparatively early age, they are free from the stern bitterness of his later works. The fresh dew and aroma of youth are still upon them. There is still something, nay much of the Renaissance spirit in Milton; so we have both *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*; only in the latter poem we have a distant shadow of the coming Puritanism.

Q. 3. *There is no doubt that Milton portrays himself in Il Penseroso. Fully justify this remark. Or, show that Milton preferred the Il Penseroso mood of life.* (C. U. 1882).

Ans. Milton lived in the age of Puritanism and was already half a Puritan when he wrote these poems. *There are various indications in the two poems and in Milton's life which enable us to say that Il Penseroso represents him more truly than L'Allegro.*

(1) Reading the two poems side by side with an open mind, one will find that Il Penseroso appears to be written with greater care and skill than L'Allegro. Therefore the mood depicted in *Il Penseroso* is more congenial to Milton than the other mood, that of *L'Allegro*.

(2) The fact that Il Penseroso is likely to be an earlier composition than *L'Allegro*, makes us infer that the reason why Milton took it up earlier is that he loved the pensive mood more than the *L'Allegro* mood.

(3) Many of the tastes and habits of Il Penseroso coincide with Milton's own so far as we know about him—e.g., his fondness for solitary walking, retired life, study at night, love of Chaucer and specially of Spenser, of organ music and church-anthems; on the whole, *the daily life of Il Penseroso reminds us of Milton at Horton.*

(4) If we compare *the closing couplets of the two poems*, we see that *L'Allegro* rests in the present—is content with what Mirth may give him, but Il Penseroso looks forward to a future, rich in prophetic vision and insight.

(5) The sincerity of his melancholy has been fully admitted by all, but the sincerity of his mirth has been questioned (see Q. 4 below).

4. *Discuss the remark—"No mirth can indeed be found in his Melancholy, but I am afraid I always meet with some Melancholy in his mirth"—Johnson.* (C. U. 1898).

Ans. There is much truth in the remark. Il Penseroso is somewhat elaborately sketched; he is true to his name, no mirth can be found in his Melancholy; Milton was at heart more sympathetic to Il Penseroso; in drawing the character of the Pensive Man, he has drawn more or less his own character.

The character of L'Allegro is rather sketchy. *The mirthful man is without humour.* In his pleasures there is little of thrill or genuine enthusiasm. His pleasures are rather of a passive character. He is more of an observer taking æsthetic pleasure in the delightful aspects of life and nature; his pleasures are more intellectual than emotional. In short, *his pleasures are of a sober colouring*, and seem to thrill or excite none—they leave us cold. There is some melancholy in his mirth.

The fact is that Milton was more sympathetic to the pensive mood and hence he drew the cheerful mood as a studied contrast to it. Thus the cheerful mood does not escape from appearing as a mood which is rather prescribed upon himself by the poet than one which is natural and congenial to him like the pensive mood of Il Penseroso.

Q. 5. Show how each of the two poems is a studied contrast to the other. (C. U. 1895).

Ans. From the following analysis of the two poems (based on Bell's) we see how the situations and circumstances of one are in studied contrast to those of the other :—

### L'Allegro

1. Loathed Melancholy  
banished :—

(a) an account of her parentage

(b) an account of her fit abode. (ll. 1—10)

2. Welcome to Mirth—

(a) her description

(b) her parentage (ll. 11—24)

3. Attendants of Mirth—  
Jest, Jollity, Quips, Cranks,  
Laughter, above all Liberty.  
(ll. 25—40)

4. Pleasures of *Morning* :—

(a) cheerful note of the lark

### Il Penseroso

1. 'Vain deluding joys'  
banished :—

(a) an account of their parentage

(b) an account of their fit abode. (ll. 1—10).

2. Welcome to Melancholy—

(a) her description,

(b) her parentage. (ll. 11—30)

3. Attendants of Melancholy—Peace, Quiet, Spare  
Fast, Leisure and above all  
Contemplation. (ll. 31—35)

4. Pleasures of *Evening* :—

(a) plaintive note of the nightingale

**L'Allegro**

(b) other sights and sounds of the gay country-side—note of the cock and the sound of the horn, the glorious sunrise, the ploughman, milkmaid, and the shepherds.

[L'Allegro being *not unseen out-of-doors*.] (ll. 41—68)

5. Pleasures of the bright Noon-day and afternoon :—

(a) the landscape scenery,

(b) country employments and enjoyments—peasants, hay-harvest, merry dancing (ll. 69—99)

6. Social pleasures of the evening—fairy-tales by the fire-side.

7. Pleasures of the Mid-night-hour *while others sleep* :—

(a) reading of romances,

(b) reading of comedies

8 Music lulls him to sleep :—

(a) The soft delicious music suited to his mood.

(b) Melting music associated with sweet thoughts. (ll. 135—150)

9. L'Allegro does not look beyond these delights.

10. Acceptance of Mirth. (ll. 151—152)

**Il Penseroso**

(b) other sights and sounds of a quiet evening—the curfew bell, the moonrise, sitting silently in a solitary and half-lighted room.

[Il Penseroso being *unseen and indoors*.] (ll. 56—84)

5. Pleasures of the mid-night hour :—

(a) study of Philosophy and demonology.

(b) study of tragedy, longing for lost poetry or music, study of romantic and chivalric poetry with deep allegorical significance. (ll. 85—120)

6. Lonely pleasures of the stormy morning.

7. Pleasures of the 'flaring' noon-day (but only in the shade) *until sleep comes*. (ll. 131—150).

8 Music wakes him from sleep :

(a) The music suited to his mood.

(b) The 'pealing organ' associated with the "studious cloister". (ll. 151—166)

9. Il Penseroso's aspirations (ll. 167—174)

10. Acceptance of Melancholy. (ll. 175—176)

**Q. 6.** Discuss Masson's theory as to the construction of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*,—namely, that "each poem describes an ideal day,—a day of twelve hours."

**Ans.** This remark is only *very generally* true of the two poems. At first, it will appear that *L'Allegro* starts at dawn and ends

after midnight, and *Il Penseroso* begins at dusk and ends after midday.

But this view is to be accepted with reservations. (1) Some of the pleasures mentioned by the poet are not *successive* but *alternative* e.g., the pleasures mentioned in *Il Penseroso*, ll. 73—85 —“or if the weather” l. 76, “or the bellman’s” l. 83, “or let my lamp” l. 85; also the poet wishes to have either “mute silence” or “the Philomel’s song.” (2) *Again it is impossible for L’Allegro to attend to so many pleasures in one evening*;—he cannot at once enjoy the fairy tales and then, after the villagers are asleep, run from country to city to enjoy wit-combats, tournaments, masques, comedy, etc. [To get a way out of this difficulty Masson suggests that *L’Allegro* only *reads* comedies and descriptions of tournaments, etc., in romances; but this misses an important trait in *L’Allegro’s* character; that, in contrast to the stay-at-home *Il Penseroso*, the cheerful man is a lover of human society. Night study is in proper keeping with the character of *Il Penseroso*; *L’Allegro* must actually *witness* the performances.]

*Thus it is best to regard, as Verity says, the experiences and pursuits of L’Allegro and Il Penseroso not as being of any particular twelve hours, but of each man’s career as a whole.*

Q. 7. *Show from a consideration of the spirit of L’Allegro and Il Penseroso in what respects Milton was at variance with the religious party to which he belonged.* (C. U. 1888)

Ans In spite of his liberal tastes, Milton was really a Puritan in his religion and habits. But these two poems were composed at an early period in his life when his mind was free from religious bigotry and bias. So in these two poems there is nothing of the bigotry, intolerance and blind party-feeling which we find in his later works. Milton tolerates the Cavalier *L’Allegro* and makes him attractive for us. He is himself half a Cavalier (originally a gallant, a pleasure lover—a term applied with a shade of the original meaning by the Puritans to the adherents of King Charles I); even in the character of *Il Penseroso*, there is much of a Cavalier which would have displeased ultra Puritans of his age:—e.g., *Il Penseroso’s* love of natural scenery, of music, of poetry, romance and tragedy, also Milton’s fondness for classical mythology places him at a distance from the bigoted Puritans of his time. The fact is that Milton steers a



middle-course between two extremes. He purges the character of the Cavalier (*L'Allegro*) of grossness and sensuality and paints him attractively ; on the other hand he strips the character of the Puritan (*Il Penseroso*) of much of his stiffness and bigotry.

Q. 8. *To what dramatic poets does Milton allude in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso? How far is his estimate of them just?* (C. U. 1905)

Ans. In the *L'Allegro* Milton alludes to the comedies of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, and differentiates the two poets very ably by a few touches. By calling Jonson 'learned' he brings out the most marked feature of his writings—viz., his classical art and learning. Jonson was a classicist in taste and practice and his elaborate comedies were written according to the rules of classical art and are full of learned references.

Shakespeare on the other hand was a romantic dramatist, observing not so much rules of art like Jonson, but writing according to the spontaneous promptings of his innate poetic instinct and imagination. Thus Milton very apply calls him "*Fancy's child*." Shakespeare is "of imagination all compact." Moreover Milton very happily compares him to a free wood-bird singing without restraint in its fullness of heart ; thus meaning that he is a poet singing out of his native imagination and essential human nature, unfettered by rules of art.

Some critics have found fault with Milton saying that he has nothing more to say of Shakespeare except that he is "sweet", and that "sweet" is an epithet not adequately describing the best works of Shakespeare : but they forget that Milton is here thinking of the joyous romantic comedies of Shakespeare, like *Love's Labour Lost*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Comedy of Errors*, etc.—the pleasant comedies of Shakespeare's youth-loved by the cheerful man.

In *Il Penseroso* Milton refers to the classical tragedies dealing with the themes of Thebes, Troy or Pelops' line—the lofty and austere writings of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. He refers to these classical dramatic poets in a spirit of genuine appreciation. But in turning to the English romantic tragedies of his day he says that great tragedies are very 'rare'. This view of his has given rise to a difference of opinion among critics. (a) Some people maintain that he is referring in that

passage to the tragedies of Shakespeare and that Milton's implication is that there are very few great tragedies in his day except those of Shakespeare : thus he pays an indirect tribute to Shakespeare :. (b) But another interpretation is that Milton does not take a very kindly attitude towards the romantic Elizabethan tragedies ; and that his implication in that passage is that really great tragedies (Shakespeare's tragedies included) are very rare in modern times. *It is very probable that a man with classical tastes and predilections like Milton should have disliked the extravagant license and excesses of the romantic tragedies of the Elizabethan age.*

Q. 9. *At what period of his life did Milton write L'Allegro and Il Penseroso ?* (C. U. 1882.)

Ans. See Introduction.

Q. 10. *"Milton's attitude towards nature is not that of a scientific naturalist, nor even that of a close observer." Discuss this criticism and show by references to L'Allegro and Il Penseroso what was Milton's attitude towards nature.* (C. U. 1895)

Ans. See Introduction.

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# John Keats (1795-1821)

**Life and Works of Keats**—John Keats was born at Moortfields on October 29, 1795. When John was in his ninth year, he lost his father who was killed by a fall from his horse. His mother seems to have been ambitious, and there was some talk of sending John to Harrow. The idea was subsequently given up as too expensive, and he was sent instead to the school of Mr. Clarke at Enfield. He does not seem to have shown any remarkable aptitudes at school, except that he was noted among his school-fellows as a strange compound of pluck and sensibility. He left school at 1810, with little Latin and no Greek. But he was steeped in Greek mythology for which he was chiefly indebted to *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary*. He was then apprenticed for five years to a surgeon at Edmonton. We do not know whether he made such a choice from personal interest or was driven into it by poverty. However, his intimacy with Cowden Clarke which he was able to continue from Edmonton had a very important bearing upon his life. Once Clarke lent him a copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. No greater miracle has been ever recorded than that of *Spenser transforming a surgeon's apprentice into a great poet*. Before long we find him studying Chaucer, then Shakespeare and afterward Milton. All this time he had been continuing the study of medicine and passed a very creditable examination in 1817. In the spring of the same year he published a small volume containing his earlier attempts in verse; in 1818, he published *Endymion* which provoked savage criticism from the *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly*; the former went a step further in brutal vulgarity by bidding the young apothecary "back to his gallipots." Some of his friends supposed that the severe criticism of *Endymion* in the two magazines preyed upon his mind, and was ultimately responsible for his early death. Byron's opinion that he was "snuffed out by an article" confirmed the same impression; Shelley wrote his *Adonais*, in which the memory of Keats is enshrined, under the same impression. Happily, it has now been disproved, and was disproved, though unheeded then, by a most emphatic statement of Keats himself during his life-time. He writes, "Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose

love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond that the *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict....." The death of his younger brother following upon this event, his consuming passion for Fanny Brawne without any chance of marriage, the dark prospect of his future—all these weighed upon his spirit. In the meantime, he had not been unmindful of the Muse. He began *Hyperion*, but had given it up in 1817, because as he said, there were "too many Miltonic inversions in it." Between 1819 and 1820, he wrote *Lamia*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Isabella*, *Hyperion*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. In the winter of 1820, he caught a chill in the course of a journey by a stage-coach, and returned home in a state of feverish excitement—on getting into bed, he coughed slightly, and found blood in his cough. He at once said, "I know the colour of that blood; it is arterial blood, I cannot be deceived in that colour. That drop is my death warrant; I must die." During the following autumn he went abroad to Naples, and then to Rome, accompanied by his friend Severn. On February 28, 1821, a change towards greater quietness and peace was noticeable in him, and he fell at last into a sweet sleep, in which he seemed to have happy dreams. On the 23rd, he passed away quietly, without pain. He desired this epithet to be placed on his grave :—

"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

**Literary Estimate** —(1) Keats was the *Poet of the Beautiful*. He possessed a very sensitive imagination that thrilled to every touch of beauty, but it is not true to say that his yearning passion for beauty is the passion of a sensuous or sentimental poet—a distinction which we ought to remember in the case of Keats. Let us first point out that *Keats' passion for beauty is an intellectual and spiritual passion*. It is, as Keats himself says, the mighty *abstract idea* of beauty in all things. The fundamental creed of his poetry is—

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Not only did Keats perceive the vital connection of beauty with truth, but of both with joy as he says—

"*A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.*"

A poet who is so absorbed by a passion for beauty cannot descend to meaner things, and can be far less satisfied with anything short of absolute devotion to the ideal of his art. "The best sort of poetry" he says, "is all I care for, all I live for."

(2) Keats' *fascinating felicity of expression and perfection of form* of which Shakespeare alone knew the secret, are also a part of his love of beauty and the result of his devotion to the *best sort of poetry*. He submitted to the severest discipline required by his art, and that mainly through his yearning passion for beauty. His earlier work, *e.g.*, *Endymion* is marked by crudities of thought and expression, by conceits, by love-sick anguish and borrowed finery, but in *Hyperion* what an advance in poetic art! How perfectly wedded are thought and music in its great passages! Take again the series of poems, *Isabella*, *Lamia*, and the *Eve of St. Agnes*. Brilliant with colour, richly ornate, and tremulous with emotion as *Isabella* is, it is saved from the overladen decorations and cloying sweetness of *Endymion*. In *Lamia* and *Eve of St. Agnes*, he developed essentially a new poetic style which was later on cultivated by Tennyson, and the generation of Pre-Raphaelite poets; in these poems his imagination seizes on incidents that are of a picturesque nature, and brings them into strong relief by the effects of colour, and by pictorial details.

(3) If we turn to the brilliant group of odes, *On a Grecian Urn*, *To Psyche*, *To Autumn*, *To a Nightingale*, etc., we notice quite new elements in his poetry, *e.g.*, his *Hellenism*, and his *love of Nature*, while the note of romanticism became deeper and purged from mere sentiment. The Hellenism of Keats expresses itself in (a) his *passion for beauty*, (b) his *simplicity and directness of expression*, (c) his appreciation of the powers of nature as mighty creative forces, (d) the human interest with which he links nature, (e) his delight in the mythology of Greece. The finer spirit and essence of Hellenism is in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. See *Questions with hints for answers*. The spirit of romanticism, that love of beauty which fascinates by its element of strangeness, is embalmed for all time in those two exquisite lines, in the *Ode to a Nightingale*:—

"Magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous Seas in Faery lands forlorn."

The romantic note is also struck in *Isabella*, *Eve of St. Agnes*, *La Belle Sans Merci* in which Keats turned to the Middle Ages for inspiration.

## ODE TO AUTUMN

**Date of Composition** :—This poem was composed in 1819. It was inspired by a quiet walk through the stubble fields around Winchester. Keats writes to his friend Reynolds thus :—"How beautiful the season is now. How fine the air—a temperate sharpness about it really ; without joking, chaste weather—Dian skies. I never liked stubble fields so much as now, aye better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow, a stubble plain looks warm, in the same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it."

**Brief Criticism**—*The Ode to Autumn is the last of Keats's Odes, and is perhaps the nearest to absolute perfection. It exhibits throughout the beauty of Nature in all its calmness and tranquillity.* It is absolutely free from the melancholy which inspired so much of Keats's other works. It has its defects too. The close adherence to Nature throughout this Ode, and its consequent absence of subjectivity deprive it of the width of range which marks the other Odes of the poet. "There is little of the reflectiveness of the *Nightingale* and none of its pathos ; no philosophy as in the *Grecian Urn* ; no landscape painting as in *Psyche* ; no allegory as in the *Indolence* and the *Melancholy*... The Romantic note is wholly wanting ; it could have no place here. But the personification of Autumn in the second stanza is in the Greek manner, as also in the description of nature for nature's sake throughout the entire poem"—Downer.

**Substance**—Autumn is first invoked as the season of mists and ripe fruits. It is the season in which under the influence of the mellow rays of the sun fruits begin to ripen to the core, and later flowers bud forth and supply honey to the bees. Next follows a picture of Autumn. The harvest has been gathered ; the husbandman sits careless on the granary floor, his hair gently played upon by soft wind. Sometimes the husbandman is found asleep in the poppy fields ; sometimes he is

seen to cross the stream with a heavy load of corn upon his head, or to watch patiently the oozings of apple wine. Lastly follows a description of the music of Autumn—the wailful sound of the gnats, the loud bleating of the full-grown lambs, the songs of the hedgecrickets, the whistling of the redbreast and the twittering of the swallows, all which amply match the joyful music of Spring. [This poem in its method of personifying Autumn offers a fruitful comparison with Rabindranath's বর্ষাঋতু ।]

**Metre**—Each stanza consists of eleven lines written in iambic pentameter.

### Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

#### Stanza 1.

**Substance**—The work of Autumn, the season of mists and fruits.

**Paraphrase**—Autumn is the time when mists form, and fruits begin to ripen. Autumn and the sun are as it were two intimate friends who lay their heads together to load the trees of the village with ripe fruits. The vines turning round the house wall bear clusters of ripe grapes; the apple trees in the cottage orchard, whose stems are covered with green moss, bend under the weight of ripe fruits. Other fruits also ripen to the core. The gourds and the hazel shells become fat with a sweet kernel. Flowers growing late in the year bud forth and supply honey to the bees who, having a plentiful stock, begin to think that summer will never cease.

**Season of mists**—Autumn is so called because mists form in this season. **Mellow fruitfulness**—ripe fruits. The figure of speech is synecdoche—abstract for the concrete. **Mellow**—ripe. **Close bosom friend**—very intimate friend. **Maturing sun**—ripening sun. **Maturing**—either because (1) the sun causes fruits to ripen under its influence (causative), (2) or because the sun himself matures (becomes old) in Autumn. The first sense is better. **Conspiring**—being in league with; combining; joining. **N.B.** Keats speaks of Autumn and the sun as two bosom friends who have conspired together to make all fruits



ripe. The simple fact that in Autumn under the influence of the mellow rays of the sun fruits begin to ripen is thus put poetically by Keats.

• *With him*—i.e., with the sun. *Load and bless*—fill. *The vines that.....sun*—the vines which twine round the eaves of the thatched cottages. Vines are trained to twine round the eaves of cottages. Note the picturesque description. *Bend with apples*—i.e., bend with the load of apples. *Mossed cottage trees*—trees of the cottage garden whose stems have been covered with green moss. *Mossed*—covered with moss. *Cottage trees*—fruit trees growing round the cottages. *All fruit*—N.B. Autumn has been presented in this stanza in its vegetative aspect. We have first (1) the grape, then (2) the apple, (3) all ripe fruit, (4) the gourd, (5) the hazelnut, and (6) the honey flowers. *Fill all fruit.....core*—i.e., make the fruits wholly ripe. *Swell*—fatten. *Plump*—make fat. *Hazel-shells*—the shells of hazel-nuts. *Kernel*—  
 \*।।। *Set budding*—cause to bud. *Later flowers*—flowers growing late in summer. *For the bees*—so that the bees might gather honey from them. *They*—the bees. *Warm days*—i.e., Summer. *Will never cease*—will never disappear. *Until they think.....cease*—This is a subjective touch—the only one in this poem. Keats is here projecting his own feelings into the mind of the bees. The bees are represented to imagine that the warm season of summer will continue for ever because their stock of honey flowers seems never to be exhausted. *Over-brimmed*—filled overflowing; filled to the brim. *Clammy cells*—cells in the hive full of sticky honey.

N.B. The student's attention is drawn to the picturesque and suggestive descriptions throughout the stanza.

(1) The vines that round the thatch-eaves run; (2) mossed cottage trees; (3) fill with ripeness to the core; (4) plump the hazel shells; over-brimmed their clammy cells.

### Stanza 2

**Substance**—A picture of Autumn. The season is personified first as a harvester during the winnowing; next as a tired reaper; then as a gleaner, and lastly as a cider-maker.

**Paraphrase**—Everyone who has eyes must have seen Autumn in the midst of her plentiful stock. The season may

well be represented by a husbandman sitting carelessly on the granary floor, whose hair is gently caressed by the winnowing wind; she next appears as a tired reaper who has fallen asleep in the very midst of his toil, being induced to sweet slumber by the soporific smell of poppies, his hand scarce parted from the sickle, while the golden corn with its flowers stands waiting to be reaped. Sometimes the season may be seen as a gleaner who has gathered the harvest and is returning home with a big load of corn upon her head. She has to steady her feet in crossing the swift stream. Last of all, the season appears as a cider-maker who is watching patiently the whole day, the drops of apple-wine coming out of the press.

*Who hath.....store*—i.e., the influence of Autumn may be seen from a look at the plenty of the season. *Store*—i.e., stock of corn.

*Whoever seeks*—Anybody who is on the lookout; anybody who seeks Autumn. *Thee*—Autumn has been personified here as a peasant who has gathered the harvest and is sitting at ease with a mind free from cares and anxieties. *Careless*—free from cares because the harvest has been gathered; at ease. *Granary floor*—floor of the farm where corn is threshed and stocked. *Soft*—gently. *Winnowing wind*—the wind separating the chaff from the grain. *Half-reaped furrow*—line of corn which has been only half-gathered. *Drowsed*—induced to sleep; sleepy. *Fume of poppies*—smell of opium. *Hook*—i.e., the reaping hook or sickle. *S pares*—does not reap; does not cut. *Swath*—handful of corn. *All its twined flowers*—all flowers twined (entangled) NB. This is a very beautiful picture. "We seem to see the slumbering labourer, fallen asleep in the very midst of his toil, the hand scarce parted from the sickle while the golden corn stands waiting to be reaped"—Downer. *Gleaner*—harvest-gatherer; mower of corn. *Keep steady etc.*—balance yourself. *Laden head*—head on which there is a heavy load of sheaves of corn. *Across a brook*—while trying to cross a swift-flowing rivulet. *And sometimes.....brook*—Expl. Autumn is here personified "as a gleaner going home at eve bearing the results of the day's gathering in a sheaf upon the head, as she chooses her steps over the stones of the brook, preserving her balance as she goes".—Downer.

*Or by a cider-press etc.*—Autumn is here represented as a cider-maker. *Cider-press*—wine-press; a mechanical contrivance to press out the juice of apples. *Cider*—apple wine. *Last oozings*—last drops of the apple juice. *Hours by hours*—for hours together.

### Stanza 3.

**Substance** —The songs of autumn :—the wailings of gnats; the bleatings of lambs; the songs of the hedge-cricket; the treble of the robin red-breast and the twitter of the swallows.

**Paraphrase** —Autumn has songs as well as spring. While in the evening red bars of clouds float in the western sky, and the soft red light of the setting sun falls upon the corn-fields, then the small gnats sing mournfully among the willows growing by the sides of rivers. These gnats are borne high or they fall down as the wind blows or dies. Young lambs bleat loudly from the sides of the hills. Grass-hoppers begin to sing, and now and then the sharp chirping of the robin is also heard from the garden croft. Last of all the swallows collecting in swarms twitter in the skies. These harmonious sounds of nature fully match the music of spring.

*Thou hast thy music too*—Autumn has songs and "music as well as spring.

*While barred clouds, etc.*—The songs of Autumn are "here introduced in a scene of sunset glory. The beauty of the heavens is first described, a point too often forgotten while we gaze upon the loveliness of the earth."—*Downer*.

*Barred clouds*—golden bars of clouds; clouds in long bars.

*Bloom the soft dying day*—touch with a soft warm tinge the gently dying day; beautify the mellow sunset. Red clouds gather round the setting sun whose light illuminates the earth as well as the sky. *Bloom*—beautify.

*Touch the stubble-plains.....huc*—touch with a tinge of red the fields of the earth. The golden corn fields look more beautiful when the mellow light of the setting sun falls upon them. *Rosy hue*—a tinge of red. *Choir*—band; chorus. *Wailful choir*—as if mourning over some dead person. The small gnats are represented as singing the death of the day.

*Then in a wailful choir etc*—"The scene given, the music follows. First, the 'mourning' buzz of the swarming gnats; a high minor note, varying with the force of the breeze, as the insects themselves rise or fall on the air."—*Downer*.

*Sallows*—a species of willows.

*Borne aloft etc.*—As the insects themselves rise or fall on the air, their singing becomes loud or low. *Borne*—carried. *Aloft*—on high. *Light*—soft; gentle. *Lives or dies*—blows with force or stops blowing.

*Full-grown lambs*—lambs born in spring would be full-grown (well-developed) in Autumn. *Loud*—loudly. *Bleat*—cry. *Hilly bourn*—edge of the hills. *Hedge-crickets*—grass-hoppers. *Treble*—a technical term in music denoting the highest notes as opposed to the bass which means the deepest.

*The redbreast*—i.e., Robin red-breast, a kind of very beautiful bird.

*Garden croft*—enclosure of the garden; hedge of the garden.

*Gathering swallows*—swallows collecting in swarms "as they rally for their winter migration, and try the strength of the wings for their long flight."

N.B. 1. "Additional interest is lent to this catalogue of sweet sounds by the locality to which each one is attributed. The gnat mourns by the river; the lambs bleat from the hill; the grass-hopper sings in the lane; the robin whistles in the garden; and the swallows twitter in the sky."—*Downer*.

2. "The width of Keats' sympathy with nature is well illustrated in the third stanza of this Ode. For him the beauty of nature meant more than that of herbage and vegetation. Here we have described the beauty of sound, for the ear is an inlet of beauty as well as the eye. The music of Nature is a new and untrodden subject and one very fit to be handled by a poet. There is natural music as well as the music of numbers. The rustling trees, the purling brook, the whistling winds, the wing of the bee, the dashing of the waves, the song of the birds, the cries of animals,—these are Nature's instruments. They sound in exquisite harmony to the ear that has learned their music."—*Downer*.

### Important Questions with Hints for Answers.

Q. 1. Write a critical appreciation of the *Ode to Autumn*.

Ans. (See Brief Criticism of this Ode).

Q. 2. Give the Substance of the *Ode to Autumn* pointing out its beauties.

Ans. (See substance and Criticism).

Q. 3. Explain :—

*Who hath not seen.....hours.*

Ans. (See paraphrase of St. 2. and Notes).

Q. 4. Characterise **Keats as a poet of Nature** comparing him with Wordsworth.

Ans. (1) Keats's delight in Nature is *usually sensuous*. He does not seek to find a spirit in Nature (like Wordsworth), or look upon Nature as the expression of Love (like Shelley), or find joy in tumultuous passions of Nature, (like Byron). He loves nature for its own varied beauties that appeal to our senses. (2) The second idea that we see in nature as seen by Keats is borrowed from the Greeks. As stopford Brooke says "The Greek did not say that the stream was alive, or the tree—but he did say that a living being, *Naiad* or Nymph, lived in the stream or in the tree, and was bound up with them. This was re-introduced into English poetry by Keats, and it lifted his nature out of death into life. The whole material world, at every part of it, was peopled by living beings who spoke to us out of the waves of the sea, and the trees of the wood, and the flowers of the hills, out of the mountains and the streams. The beauty and glory of the universe was the beauty and glory of life. Hence he had a more intimate sense of loveliness in nature than either Scott or Byron, and a simpler sense of life than either Shelley or Wordsworth."

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# William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

For Life, works, etc. of Wordsworth—

See pp. 144—150.

## THE FOUNTAIN

**Date of Composition**—The poem was written in 1799, and first published in 1800.

**The Title**—The poet's companion Matthew, an old man of seventy-two, relates to him the memories of the past called up at the sight of the fountain so familiar to him from his boyhood; and Wordsworth reflects and moralises on them. Hence the poem is called *The Fountain*.

**The subject matter of the poem.**—*It does not describe any fountain. It is a highly reflective piece in which the author comments on the artificial conventions of human life as distinguished from the simple life of Nature. Sad memories of the past years rise up in the minds of Matthew at the sight of the old familiar fountain. There has come a great change in his life; but the fountain has not changed. It is the old, old fountain that has gone murmuring for years and will go on murmuring for ever. This leads the poet to contrast the artificial conventions of human life with the perfect ease and naturalness which mark the life of Nature. Man often puts on the artificial mark of joy because he has been joyful once, and because the world requires him to do so. Thus an old man appears to be most mirthful when his heart is being wrung by sad memories of the past. This artificial striving to live against nature is what is condemned by Wordsworth in the present poem.*

**The identity of Matthew** :—It has been supposed that the person described as Matthew in this poem was the Rev. William Taylor, the village schoolmaster of Hawkshead where Wordsworth read as a boy. But it must be remembered that the picture of Matthew was only suggested by the character of Rev. Taylor. In other words Matthew is an idealised picture of

Taylor. The streamlet described in the poem has been identified with the famous Hawkshead brook.

**Brief Criticism**—The poem is a highly reflective piece and illustrates Wordsworth's method of deliberately withdrawing his imagination from the heart of his picture to contemplate it in its spiritual relations. Thus in *The Fountain* Wordsworth suddenly checks the current of emotion, and makes it the object of contemplation. This contemplation seriously brings to the mind of the poet-philosopher fresh conviction that "the ebbing away both in spirit and in appearance, of the brightest past, sad as it must ever be, is not so sad a thing as the weak yearning which, in departing, it often leaves stranded on the soul, to cling to the appearance when the Spirit is irrevocably lost." *Wordsworth was never the poet of emotion; he was always meditative, and contemplation was his forte.*

**Substance**—The young poet lay beside a fountain one day with his companion Matthew, an old man of seventy-two. He requested his aged friend to sing a merry song which would suit the occasion. But Matthew was mysteriously silent for a while. At last with his eyes riveted on the brook the old man remarked that his mind was filled with sad thoughts as he looked at the fountain gurgling by and listened to the murmuring of the brook. He does not lament, so much for the joys of youth that have vanished, as for the foolish habit of artificially clinging to the appearance of joy when the spirit is irrevocably gone. Lower animals are happy because they obey the laws of nature; they never try to be happy when their minds are filled with sorrow. But man has to appear joyful even when his mind is being wrung by sorrow, simply because he has been happy of yore. Thus Matthew is considered to be the happiest man, and has to put on the mask of joy because the world requires him to do so. But he himself knows that his outward appearance is only a false index of his mind. His days are numbered. He has many young friends, but those friends whom he would like to have, are all dead and gone. He feels that he is not enough loved. At this the poet interrupts him, and wishes to be a son to Matthew, but Matthew tells him that this cannot be for the place of his lost son can never be filled. At this stage they both rise from the fountain side, and as they walk away Matthew recovers the jollity of his heart and entertains his young friend with one of his witty songs.

**Analysis :—**

1. The poet asks Matthew to sing a merry song as they are seated beside a murmuring brook (Sts. 1-4)

2. But Matthew is silent. The bubbling of the waters of the fountain has filled his mind with sorrow, and tears rush to his eyes as he remembers the sweet days of youth passed near the familiar fountain. Then the old man muses on human life, and condemns the artificial striving against nature which marks it at every stage of our growth. (Sts. 5—13).

3. Matthew complains that he is not enough loved as all his friends and relations are dead and gone. At this the poet wishes to love Matthew as his own son, but Matthew says that that cannot be. Thereupon both the friends rise from the fountain side, and as they walk away Matthew entertains his young friend with a comic song. (Sts. 14-18).

**Metre:**—Alternate lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter. Scan thus :—

We talk'ed | with o' | pen heart | and tongu'e  
 Affe'c | tion'a'te | and true | .  
 A pair' | of friends | though I' | was young,  
 And •Ma't | thew se'ven | ty tw'o |

**Notes, Explanations, References, etc.**

**Stanzas 1—4. Substance**—The poet and Matthew were sitting and chatting beneath a spreading oak tree near a brook. The poet was in a merry mood, and he asked his aged companion to sing a merry song that would suit the occasion.

*With open heart*—quite freely and frankly; without any reserve. Matthew was an old man of seventy-two while the poet was quite young. Yet they were intimate friends and talked freely without any reserve.

*We talked.....true*—Matthew and the poet were talking quite familiarly just as two intimate friends would.

*A pair of friends.....seventy-two*—In spite of the great difference of years the poet and Matthew were intimate friends.



*Matthew*—In another poem—*The Two April Mornings*—Wordsworth refers to Matthew as a village schoolmaster. Critics suppose that the original of Matthew was Wordsworth's schoolmaster, the Rev. William Taylor who was the village schoolmaster at Hawkshead. See Introduction.

*Spreading*—branching wide.

*Mossy seat*—a seat on the bank of the streamlet covered with moss. *Fountain*—spring.

*Broke*—burst. *Gurgled at our feet*—threw up its water with a gurgling sound. *Gurgle* is a very graphic word here. It describes the interrupted flow of the water of the fountain.

*Match*—set against as equal ; suit ; set a counterpart to.

*Match this water's pleasant tune with etc*—sing a merry song as an accompaniment to the music of the fountain.

*The water's pleasant tune*—the sweet music of the fountain ; the bubbling of the fountain.

*Old border song*—"some song, such as the *Ballad of Chevy Chase*, of the wild life of the Scottish Border, where 'moss troopers' in old days owned no law but the strong hand"—*Turner*. *Border song*—a ballad celebrating the warlike deeds of the English and the Scottish people who lived on the borders of England and Scotland.

*Catch*—A song the parts of which are 'caught up' by different voices ; snatch of a humorous song.

*Or of the church clock and the chimes*—Or let us sing the comic song about the church clock which you composed last summer. Probably this was a humorous song about the church-clock which refused to keep correct time.

*Chimes*—ringing of the church bells.

*Half-mad*—crazy. *Witty*—comic.

**Stanzas 5—14. Substance**—But Matthew is silent. His mind is living over the past. The gurgling sound of the fountain so familiar to him from his boyhood has brought tears to his eyes. It reminds him of the sweet days of childhood when life ran as merrily as the gushing waters of the fountain.

But while the fountain is running as merrily as it did in his boyhood, what a heavy change has come upon him. He is no longer the bright smiling boy that he was once. Yet he has no regret for the loss of strength and vigour so much as he has for the artificial convention of human life which makes him cling to the appearance of joy when the spirit of it is gone for ever.

*Eyed the spring*—looked eagerly at the fountain. *Glee*—mirth.

*The grey haired man of glee*—Matthew who was regarded as the man of mirth in spite of his old age. Notice that the expression strikes the keynote to Matthew's character. He like other men had to keep up an appearance of joy in his old age because he had been known to be joyful once.

*Check*—stop. *Stay*—stop.

*No check*.....*fears*—The free course of the fountain cannot be checked by any obstacle.

*'T will murmur*.....*flows*—The fountain is an object of Nature which is unchangeable and eternal as opposed to the changeful course of human life. Hence the fountain will run on merrily for ever. Cf. Tennyson's *Brook* :—

*"For men may come and men may go  
But I go on for ever."*

*Cannot choose but think*—must think ; cannot help thinking.

*Vigorous*—strong and stout ; full of energy.

*I lay*—i.e., in my boyhood and youth.

*Beside*.....*brink*—on the bank of this streamlet ; by the side of this fountain.

*My eyes are dim*—my eyes are filled with tears.

*Childish tears*—'childish' because the cause of such tears is unknown ; tears come apparently without sufficient motive.

Cf. Tennyson—"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean".

*Idly stirred*—moved without any reason.

*For*—This gives the apparent reason. Tears rushed to his eyes because the sight of the bubbling fountain filled him with the thought of the sweet days (of his youth) which are no more. He is hearing the same murmuring music of the fountain, but his heart has changed.

*Fares*—happens. *Still*—always. *In our decay*—in our old age.

*Thus fares it still in our decay*—So it happens always in our old age. In our old age we lose strength and vivacity, and at the sight of the old familiar things we are tortured by the memory of by-gone times. *And yet*—inspite of the fact that we lose strength and vivacity and are tortured by the memory of past happiness. *The wiser mind*—every sensible old man.

*Mourns*—laments. *For what age takes away*—i.e., for the loss of strength and the joys of youth in our old age.

*What it leaves behind*—(1) This is ordinarily explained as “the memories of by-gone times”—and Tennyson’s famous line “our sorrow’s crown of sorrow is the remembering of happier things” has been quoted in support of this view. (2) But the correct explanation seems rather to be this:—the foolish habit of living or striving to live against nature, the “putting on an appearance of happiness when the spirit is irrevocably gone.

*Thus fares it still in our decay.....behind*—**Expl.** Matthew points out how the sight of the old familiar fountain has called up in his mind memories of the happy past which is gone for ever. His mind presents a sad contrast to the bubbling fountain that is flowing merrily. There is not the same joy in his mind; it has undergone a change. This change is experienced by every old man. Yet the strange fact is that old men indulge in vain regrets over the unreturning past. They lament for the days that are no more. But instead of vainly regretting the past they should do well to cure themselves of the foolish habit of putting on an appearance of joy when the spirit of joy is gone for ever.

Prof. Peterson explains the lines thus:—“The old are apt to indulge in vain regrets over the unreturning past. A more

fitting subject of regret is that time, as it passes, does not cure us of the foolish habit of living or striving to live against nature."

Hutton's excellent comment on the lines runs thus :—

"The ebbing away both in spirit and in appearance of the brightest past, sad as it must ever be, is not so sad a thing as the weak yearning which, in departing, it often leaves stranded on the soul to cling to the appearance when the spirit is irrecoverably lost."

*The blackbird*—A very beautiful English bird. *The lark above the hill*—the skylark that soars high up in the air. *Let loose their carols*—pour forth their melodious songs. *When they please*—spontaneously and at will ; of their own accord. *Are quiet*—stop singing. *When they will*—when they like.

*With Nature.....strife*—The birds obey the laws of nature. They produce songs when they have a mind to do it ; they become silent when they do not like to sing. Man, however, tries to live against nature. He puts on an appearance of joy when his mind is no longer happy.

*Foolish strife*—The striving to live against nature which marks the life of man is sure to end in a defeat for the man. Hence this strife is called foolish. It is foolish of men to live against nature. *With Nature.....free*—**Expl.**—The life of the birds is marked by joy and beauty simply because they obey the laws of nature. Man's life is a sad contrast to this happy life of the objects of Nature. Man is unhappy because he tries to live against Nature.

*Beautiful and free*—free from all sorts of artificial restraints which man imposes upon himself. *We—i.e.*, we human beings.

*Pressed*—tortured. *Heavy laws*—the rigorous conventions of society, as against the simple laws of nature.

*Glad no more*—though we are unhappy. *Of yore*—in the past.

*But we are.....glad of yore*—**Expl.**—In these lines Matthew contrasts the happy life of the birds of nature with the unhappy life led by men and women who live or strive to live against

nature. "We human beings labour under artificial restraints. Unlike the blackbird and the lark which carol when they will and are silent when they will, we have the misfortune to put on the appearance of joy even when the spirit of joy is irrevocably gone."

*Who need bemoan*—who has real cause for lamenting over the loss of friends and relatives.

*Kindred*—friends and relations *Laid in earth*—buried. *The household hearts.....own*—His children and dear friends who were his own.

*It is the man of mirth*—It is myself (Matthew) whom you call the man of mirth. This line gives us the key to Matthew's real nature. He has suffered much in his life. His mind was most unhappy, yet because he maintained an outward show of happiness people thought he was a happy man. We learn now that his 'glee' was a mask imposed by custom and convention.

*Approved—i.e.*, by God. God sees that my end is drawing near.

*And many love me.....beloved*—Though Matthew is loved by many new friends (e.g., by the poet) he yearns for the love of the old friends and relatives who are no more. As Peterson puts it: "It is the friends of his youth whom the old man requires."

*By none.....beloved*—Matthew "does not get from his new friends that amount of affection which he used to get from the friends of his youth who are now dead and gone."

**Stanzas 15—18. Substance**—Upon this the poet protested saying that he was as gay and free as the blackbird or the lark, and that he loved Matthew dearly and would like to be a son to him. At this Matthew only shook his head and said that it could not be. In spite of his deep love, the poet could never fill the place of a son. The two friends rose up and began to descend the hills, and before they came to Leonard's rock Matthew regained the brightness of his mind and sang the humorous ballad about the old church clock and the chimes.

*Both himself and me he wrongs etc.* Expl.—(These are the remarks of the poet.) By asserting that the birds of nature are happier than men and that he is not enough beloved Matthew does an injustice not only to himself but also to the poet. Matthew is mistaken, he is under a delusion; that is how he wrongs himself. He has certainly friends and relatives to love him as dearly as his old friends. Then again the poet thinks that he (the poet) is as gay and free as the blackbird or the skylark, for does not he sing his idle songs as freely as they on these pleasant meadows? As regards the complaint that his old friend is not enough loved by others, well, even if it be true, he (the poet) will be a son to him (Matthew).

*He*—This word is redundant. *For thy children dead*—to fill the place of your children who are no more. *Grasped my hand*—as a token of deep emotion. The old man was deeply moved by the kind words of the poet. *Alas! that cannot be*—Matthew tells the poet that the place of children who are dead and gone can never be filled; what is lost can never be replaced. *Sheep-track*—Mountain sides where the sheep graze. *Glide*—rapidly come down. *Ere*—before. *Leonard's rock*—It has not been identified. Most probably this is an unknown local reference.

*Those witty rhymes*—the comic verses about the church clock and the chimes, referred to in St. 4. *Crazy*—mad. The church clock is so called humorously because it did not keep correct time and struck at irregular intervals. *Bewildered*—confused and irregular because the clock struck wrong hours. *Chimes*—striking of the clock.

*And, ere we came.....chimes*—N.B. The readiness with which Wordsworth makes the old schoolmaster recover his spirits is striking because it shows what a keen observer of human nature the poet was. It is well-known that "persons of deep emotional susceptibilities pass rapidly through a variety of sensations and emotions." It also proves that man is after all a creature of convention. Matthew was so long lamenting over the days of his youth and the loss of old familiar faces. Yet even this man whose heart was wrung with sorrow assumed an aspect of joy immediately after his lamentation and stern musing on human life that such lamentation brought in its train.

**Important questions with hints for Answers.**

*(Important questions are marked with asterisks).*

Q. 1. State the subject matter of the poem, and give reasons why you like the poem. (See *Subject* and *Brief Criticism*).

Q. 2. Give the substance of the poem so as to bring out its main idea. (See *Substance*).

Q. 3. Explain fully the following passages :—

- \*(a) *Thus fares it still.....behind*
  - \*(b) *The blackbird.....of yore*
  - (c) *If there be.....mirth*
  - (d) *Now both himself.....cannot be.*
- — — — —

## E. B. Browning (1806-1861)

**Life of E. B. Browning**—Elizabeth Barrett Browning was born at Coxhoe Hall, Durham, March 6, 1806; the early years of her girlhood were spent on her father's estate in Herefordshire. At ten she was able to read Homer in the original, and in her teens she wrote an epic on *The Battle of Marathon*. When she was about 18, she seriously injured her spine by a fall from a horse, and was for a long time an invalid. In 1833, she issued a translation of the *Prometheus Unbound*; by this time she had already made herself known as a poetess of no mean order by her publication of the *Essay on Mind and other Poems*. In 1838, another volume of poems, including *The Seraphim and other Poems* followed. In 1846, she first met Robert Browning, and they were married next year. In 1850, another volume of poems was issued; her best work, however, is *Aurora Leigh* published in 1856 and her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* are the best love-poems in the language. Mrs. Browning died at Florence 30th June, 1861.

**Literary Estimate**—It has been noted above that Mrs. Browning showed a too early promise of her poetic gift. That she commands ease and facility goes without saying, but the point is whether she combines truth and substance with ease and facility. Mrs. Browning always valued truth or substance in writing more than anything else; *all her poetry is marked by sincerity of feeling and experience* and no poem of hers seems to be a cobweb of fancy. She is best known for her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, and they are grounded in her personal experiences. *Just as her poems go direct to our hearts, so almost each of them has something to teach us*; we do not mean that her poems are directly didactic, what we mean is that valuable lessons are implied in many of her poems.

## COWPER'S GRAVE

**Brief Criticism**—*The poem is marked throughout by Mrs. Browning's unbounded faith in God.* The central idea of the



poem that no man, however sinful, is deserted by the All-merciful Father is developed with reference to Cowper's life—his temporary insanity and his recovery through the mercy of God. The *halling metre* of the poem is in full harmony with its ideas, but the poem is not free from *obscurities* which mar its beauty at times.

**Substance**—Mrs. Browning describes the thoughts that rise in her mind at the sight of Cowper's grave. Cowper became mad and for a time lost faith and hope. In this state he produced verses which all deal with his religious despair. He fancied that he was a sinful creature utterly forsaken by God. At Cowper's grave happy saints may pray for him and sorrow for him. Yet this sorrow is not at all needed for the poet received the blessing of God and is now enjoying the sweet repose of death.

Though stricken with madness he produced verses which have immortalised his name. He tried to sweeten the life of men and women by writing delightful verses. He suppressed his own agony and despair and filled the hearts of his readers with hope and faith. He wrote for their good, and died after fulfilling the noble task of the poet. His life was a tragic one, and readers can hardly go through his biography without shedding tears. He struggled heroically to keep a smiling face just to sanctify the poet's high vocation, and filled the hearts of his readers with faith, hope, and charity. His name has thus become a household word. (Sts. 1—4).

A calm reflection over Cowper's life is sure to fill one's heart with gratefulness to God for it shows how God does not forsake his humblest creation. Madness came upon Cowper, and blinded him to the love of God; but God's providence did not desert him, and directed his attention to the soft influences of Nature. Thus Nature cured his heart, made it soft and tender, and inspired him with the divine gift of poetry. His heart was drawn to the wild hares which became his pets. The world became good, and its men and women became his fast affectionate friends. (Sts. 5—7).

Though the poet in his moral blindness failed to see the hand of Providence, yet in his lucid moments his writings bore testimony to the great truth that the yearning of man's soul can

be satisfied by faith in God alone. Neither the affection of man nor the beauty of Nature can satisfy our soul's craving for ever. So the poet's soul cried for God, and like a child in delirium failing to recognise the affectionate mother tending him with fond care, the poet did not recognise God's presence near him in his madness. But faith soon returned to him when his life's fitful fever was over, and he felt the loving presence of Christ in him. (*Sts. 8—11*).

It is absurd to think that God ever deserts His children, however sinful they may be. He (Christ) who died on the Cross to redeem mankind from the original sin of Adam does not certainly withdraw His mercy from His creation. In fact God has taught us that even sinners are not forsaken by Him. Thus Cowper died with the full knowledge that he was saved by God, and the rapture of this knowledge knew no bounds.

• (*Sts. 12—14*)

**Central Idea**—No man, however sinful, should think that he is forsaken by God, for God never forsakes His children for whom He died on the Cross.

**Metre**—Iambic heptameter (ballad metre) with an extra syllable at the end of each line.

### “ Notes, Explanations, References, etc.

**The Title**—Cowper died very peacefully on April 25, 1800, and was buried in Dereham church, Norfolk. The present poem describes the sentiments that rose in the mind of Elizabeth Barrett Browning at the sight of Cowper's grave. Hence the title.

**Stanza 1. Substance**—The sight of Cowper's grave may fill the hearts of great poets with humbleness for Cowper was certainly greater than many other poets whose renown has been well established. The sight of his grave may also fill the hearts of blessed innocent saints with sorrow for the poet who became mad and fancied that he was a sinful creature deserted by God. Consequently they may pray for him. Yet there is no reason why sorrow and humbleness should overtake one's heart at the sight of the poet's grave seeing that he is enjoying a sweet rest here undisturbed by the cares and troubles of earthly life.

*It is a place—i.e., the grave of Cowper is a place etc. Poets crowned*—successful poets whose fame has been well established; poets who have been crowned with success. *May feel the heart's decaying*—(1) may feel humbleness of spirit for Cowper's poetic genius was far greater than theirs. Besides Cowper's fame as the precursor of the Romantic School of poetry will live for ever. (2) Or it may refer to the vanity of poetic fame. Cowper was a great poet. Yet how sad and miserable was his life! And other great poets will feel saddened by the tragedy of Cowper's life.

*Happy saints*—blessed saints whose mind is never disturbed by any thought of sin.

*May weep*—may express sorrow for Cowper's sins. N.B. It is not certain if Cowper actually committed any great sin in life. Be that as it may, after his first attack of madness he began to think that he was the most sinful creature on earth and deserted by God. The poet is referring to this here. *Yet let.....languish*—there is no ground for sorrow or humbleness. *Calm*—peaceful repose. *To whom*—to the poet Cowper whom. *She*—earth. *Gave her anguish*—gave her cup of sorrow. *Anguish*—sorrow.

N.B. "*From nature he (Cowper) received, with a large measure of the gifts of genius, a still larger measure of its painful sensibilities.* In his portrait by Romney the brow bespeaks intellect, the features feeling and refinement, the eye madness. The stronger parts of character, the combative and propelling forces he evidently lacked from the beginning. For the battle of life he was totally unfit. His sensibility not only rendered him incapable of wrestling with a rough world, but kept him always on the verge of madness, and frequently plunged him into it. To the malady which threw him out of active life we owe not the meanest of English poets."—*Goldwin Smith.*

*Earth surely.....anguish—Expl.* Cowper's earthly life was full of pains and sorrows due to the attack of madness which overtook him at the age of thirty-two. He was never radically cured, but went on suffering. Now after his death we may well hope that he is enjoying peace in the bosom of Mother Earth.

## Stanza 2.

**Substance**—Though seized with madness Cowper wrote immortal poetry and heralded the dawn of a new era in English literature known as the Romantic Revival. Though he believed that he was de-erted by God for his great sin, he never lost faith in God. He tried his utmost to sweeten the life of man. He suffered inly, but gave others peace and comfort, and died seeing them happy.

*Maniac*—a mad man. *From a maniac's tongue*—from the tongue of Cowper who became mad early in life.

**N.B.** When Cowper was thirty-two there came the sad and decisive crisis of his life. He went mad and attempted suicide. Nobody knows what the source of his madness was. There is a vague tradition that it arose from licentiousness. But there is no proof of anything of the kind. His confessions of his own past sinfulness point to nothing worse than general ungodliness and occasional excess in wine. Generally, his madness is said to have been religious. But even this does not seem to be true. Probably his malady was simple hypochondria, having its source in delicacy of constitution and weakness of digestion, combined with the influence of melancholy surroundings. He had lost his love, his father, his home and a dear friend, and all these aggravated his illness. When he had become a Methodist his hypochondria took a religious turn. Cowper fancied in his madness that he was a great sinner forsaken by God.

*Was poured*—came out. *Deathless singing*—immortal poetry. The reference is to poems like the *Task* and *John Gilpin* which have made Cowper's name immortal. It must be remembered that Cowper was the greatest among the precursors of the Romantic Revival in English poetry. As a poet of Nature, he was the forerunner of Wordsworth.

*Cross of hope*—Jesus Christ died on the cross. From that day the Cross has been regarded by the Christians as the symbol of hope and faith in Christ. It is through suffering that man attains heavenly happiness.

*A hopeless hand*—Cowper who had lost all hope of being saved by God.

*This man*—i.e., Cowper. *Weary paths*—human life which is so full of misery.

*Beguiling*—relieving the sorrows of men by writing pleasant verses like *John Gilpin*; deceiving men into the belief that there was no sorrow in their life. Thus Cowper tried to sweeten the life of others.

\* *Groaned inly*—suffered within. See *ante*—note on Cowper's madness.

*While he taught you peace.....smiling*—N. B. "The world into which the child Cowper came was one very adverse to him, and at the same time very much in need of him. It was a world from which the spirit of poetry seemed to have fled... Ignorance and brutality reigned in the cottage. Drunkenness reigned in palace and cottage alike. Gambling, cock-fighting and bull-fighting were the amusements of the people.....of humanity there was as little as there was religion.....But a change was at hand, and a still mightier change was in prospect". It is to be remembered that Cowper's contribution to the bringing about this change was great indeed.

*Died.....smiling*—thus the poet died after accomplishing his great task *viz.*,—bringing back peace and sweetness to human life.

### Sts. 3 & 4.

"The sad story of Cowper's life is now known to all. We all know how he became mad and how, though broken-hearted, he stood bravely with a smiling face, and did not desert the high calling of the poet *viz.*, the restoration of happiness to men by instilling into their minds faith, hope, and charity. Because he accomplished this noble task his name has become a household word, and his sad life approved by God.

*What time*—a Latinism for "when." *Dimming tears*—blinding tears; tears that dim the vision. It is impossible to restrain tears while reading the tragic story of Cowper's life.

*How discord on the music fell*—how there was a rift in the lute of his life; *i.e.*, how he became mad and miserable, how his otherwise sweet temperament gave way to bitterness and hopelessness. *Darkness on the glory*—how his robust faith in God was lost through the malady that attacked him.

*Sweet sounds.....departed*—this refers to the loss of affectionate ties. As we have pointed out above Cowper's malady was aggravated by the loss of his love, his father, his

home and his very dear friend. *Because so broken-hearted*—The construction is: because though he was so broken-hearted he shall be strong etc.

*Sanctify*—make sacred; hold divine. *Vocation*—calling. *The poet's high vocation*—the noble task of the poet to sing of the glories of God and to restore faith in men's life. *And bow.....adoration*—make the devout Christian all the more religious and prayerful. *Adoration*—worship of God. *In praise*—while praising him.

*Named softly.....taken*—His life being approved by God, and the great task of his life being fulfilled his name shall become a household word. *Softly*—gently; tenderly. *Hath taken*—hath approved.

### Sts. 5 & 6.

**Substance**—The life story of Cowper teaches us to be grateful to God who never deserts His humblest creation. Though the poet suffered from madness which blinded his vision towards the loving care of God he saw the glory of God in the sights and sounds of Nature and was inspired with divine poetry. The hills and the stars gave him sweetness and moulded his verses; the bright dew drops on the grass restored brightness and liveliness to his spirits, and the gentle sylvan shades filled him with peaceful repose, and prevented his mind from going astray.

*Quiet sadness*—sadness that is mixed up with meekness and does not disturb the mind. *Gloom*—is a stronger term.

*With meekness.....God*—A calm contemplation of Cowper's life teaches us to be grateful to God for it shows that God's love does not desert even a mad man.

*Whose heaven hath won him*—who has been successful in saving him from the temptations of the devil (Satan).

*Who—i.e., God. Suffered*—allowed. *The madness cloud*—the malady of Cowper which like a cloud blinded his vision towards the loving care of God.

*His own love*—God's love for Cowper. As we have pointed earlier Cowper in his madness began to fancy that he was forsaken by God. He forgot that God as a loving Father could not forget even the most sinful of His children

*Where breath and bird could find him—i.e.*, to Nature full of soft breezes and the melodious chirping of birds.

*Could find him*—became his comfort. Cowper was a great lover of Nature, and became the fore-runner of Wordsworth in this respect. It was Cowper who wrote the famous line; "God made the country, Man made the town."

*Shattered brain*—brain in a deranged state as the brain of the maniac is. *And wrought.....senses*—inspired him with the divine gift of poetry.

*As hills.....influences*—The mighty hills and the calm stars influenced his mind and inspired him with poetry. *The pulse of dew*—the quivering dew drops upon the grass. *Kept his within its number—i.e.*, kept his pulse steady; regulated his pulse and thus prevented his mind from going astray.

*Silent shadows.....slumber*—the sylvan shadows gave him as much peace and relief as sound sleep gives a man. In other words, the peaceful objects of nature gave him peace and tranquillity.

N.B. "Since his recovery, Cowper had been looking out for what he most needed, a pleasant occupation. He tried drawing, carpentering, and gardening. Of gardening he had always been fond.....A little green house, used as a parlour in Summer, where he sat surrounded by beauty and fragrance, and lulled by pleasant sounds, was another product of the same pursuit, and seems almost Elysian in that dull dark life. He also found amusement in keeping tame hares, and he fancied that he had reconciled the hare to man and dog. His three tame hares are among the canonized pets of literature"—*Goldwin Smith*.

### Stanza 7.

**Substance**—Cowper became a lover of animal life. Hares became his pets and they with their fond looks filled his eyes with tenderness. He also gained the lifelong affection of men and women.

*Wild timia hares*—See the quotation above. Cowper's three tame hares have been celebrated in his writings. *To share his home-caresses*—to enjoy his love by becoming his pets.

*Uplooking to*—gazing fondly at. *Sylvan tenderness*—tenderness which is so found in the looks of wild animals like the hare, the deer, etc. *Sylvan*—pertaining to woods.

*God's constraint*—the irresistible laws of God ; God's providence. *From falsehood's ways removing*—moving away from sin and deceit i.e., becoming pious and godly. *Its men and women etc.*—the reference is to Cowper's friendship with Newton, Mrs. Unwin, Lady Austen & Lady Hesketh. Mrs. Unwin became a mother to Cowper and tended him fondly in his madness. She and Lady Hesketh remained true to the poet till the end of their life. *Beside him*—by his side. *True and loving*—faithful and affectionate.

N.B. The following lines from Cowper's life by Goldwin Smith are a commentary on this stanza :—

"In his writings generally, but especially in *The Task*, Cowper besides being an apostle of virtuous retirement, and evangelical piety, is, by his general tone, an apostle of sensibility. *The Task* is a perpetual protest not only against the fashionable vices and the irreligion, but against the hardness of the world and in a world which worshipped Chesterfield the protest was not needless, nor was it ineffective. Among the most tangible characteristics of this special sensibility is the tendency of its brimming love of humankind to overflow upon animals ; and of this there are marked instances in some passages of *The Task*.

"I would not enter on my list of friends  
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,  
Yet wanting sensibility) the man  
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm."

...                      ...                      ...                      ...

"The interest of his relations and his friends in him revived and those of whom he had heard nothing for many years emulously renewed their connection."

### Stanza 8.

**Substance**—Though Cowper in his moral \*blindness did not feel the direct influence of God in shaping his destiny, yet the poems written in his lucid (sane) moments all bear testimony to the great truth that God and God alone satisfies our soul's



hunger. Neither man nor Nature can fully satisfy our soul's craving.

*In blindness*—in his moral blindness which was due to his malady. Cowper in his malady wrote some blasphemous things.

*Unconscious*—unaware. *That guiding*—God's providence ; the hand of God giving him all that he required.

*And things provided.....providing*—The things he required in his malady came so spontaneously that Cowper did not see the hand of God in supplying them in his need. He had not to pray for those blessings ; besides his vision was blinded by his malady. Hence he did not recognise God's providence that was giving him all that he required.

*Testified*—bore testimony to. *Solemn*—great.

*Phrenzy*—madness.

*Nor man.....created*—This is the great truth that Cowper's life bears testimony to:—Man who is the child of God refuses to be satisfied by man or Nature. Neither man nor Nature with all their blessings and caresses can fully satisfy the higher cravings of our soul. It is God alone who satisfies the thirst of the human soul.

### Sts. 9—10

**Substance.**—Just as a child who is suffering from the delirium of fever fails to recognise the affectionate mother incessantly nursing him in his sickness and cries for her again and again, so also Cowper in his madness failed to recognise the hand of God that was tending him. And like a child joyfully recognising the mother when the fever is gone, the poet also recognised the tender looks of God fondly watching over him, when his madness was gone.

*Knoweth not his mother*—fails to recognise his mother in his delirium.

*While she blesses*—while she is caressing the child and praying for him.

*And drops upon.....kisses*—gently kisses him so as to make his hot forehead cool.

*Burning brow*—hot forehead because of the heat of the fever. When the fever rises our brow seems to burn.

*Fevered eyes*—delirious looks.

*My mother.....mother*—Thus the child cries not knowing that his mother is fondly bending over him.

*Tender words*—the soft, affectionate words spoken by the mother to soothe the child.

*Deeds*—the caresses of the mother, and her nursing the child.

*The fever gone*—when the fever is gone.

*With leaps of heart*—The child's heart dances with joy as he recognises his mother bending over him with fond looks.

*Watchful love*—loving watchfulness. The mother has to pass sleepless nights when the child is ill.

*Unweary love*—unceasing affection ; the mother's affection which never dwindles.

*Thus*—like a child waking to recognise his mother when the fever's delirium is gone.

*Dream*—frenzy ; madness. *Life's long fever*—his long life full of fret and fever.

*Deep pathetic Eyes etc.*—the deep tender looks of Christ who died on the cross to save mankind from the original sin of Adam.

*To save him*—to save the poet and other men.

" Cowper has given us a full account of his recovery :—

...It came in the form of a burst of religious faith and hope. He rises one morning feeling better ; grows cheerful over his breakfast, takes up the Bible, which in his fits of madness he always threw aside, and turns to a verse in the Epistle to the Romans. 'Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon in His blood, and the fulness and completeness of his justification. In a moment I believed and received the Gospel'.....

Cowper hymned his deliverance in *The Happy Change*, as in the hideous Sapphics he had given religious utterance to his despair.

The soul, a dreary province once  
Of Satan's dark domain,  
Feels a new empire form'd within,  
And owns a heavenly reign.  
The glorious orb whose golden beams  
The fruitful year control,  
Since first obedient to Thy word,  
He started from the goal,  
Has cheer'd the nations with the joys  
His orient rays impart ;  
But Jesus, 't is Thy light alone  
Can shine upon the heart."

— Goldwin Smith

### St. 11

**Substance**—Cowper's awakening into the consciousness of God's providence was deeper than the awakening of the child from the delirium of fever or the awakening of any other man. When the end came he recognised at last that God had not deserted him.

**Thus ?**—The poet is not satisfied with the above imagery. She has compared Cowper's awakening with that of a child suffering from fever. But she now says that there is nothing in this world which can adequately express the idea of Cowper's awakening from the fitful fever of life.

**No type of earth**—no earthly image or comparison. **Image**—compare ; adequately express. **Chant of seraphs**—song of the angels.

**Round him breaking**—bursting round him ; being sung round him. The popular conception is that after death the soul of a virtuous man is regaled with the song of angels.

**New immortal throb of soul**—the pleasant sensation which the immortal soul feels when it is liberated from the body.

**Parted**—liberated from the body at death.

**Felt those eyes alone**—felt the watchful presence of Christ alone. The idea is that Cowper became unconscious of every

thing else at the time of his death save and except the loving presence of God.

*My Saviour...deserted*—Thus the poet realised at the last moment of his life that he was not deserted by God (as he had wrongly fancied in his madness).

## Stanza 12.

**Substance**—The very idea that God deserts His creature is preposterous. Even when Jesus Christ died on the cross his eyes shone with love for mankind. He comes always to those who need Him and sheds tears for them. As the Holy Ghost He restores faith to men at the last moment of their life. Certainly He cannot desert His children for whom he died on the cross !

*Deserted*—The very idea that God deserts a man is absurd—preposterous. *When the cross in 'darkness rested*—i.e., when Jesus Christ died upon the cross.

*Victim's hidden face*—The face of Christ covered with His hands. *Love*—affection for men who crucified Him. *Manifested*—shown.

*Frantic hands*—hands of a mad man who cries for mercy. *Outstretched*—spread out for mercy. *Atoning drops*—tears shed by Christ for men when he died on the cross to atone for the sin of Adam ; God's mercy. *Averted*—turned aside or away from.

*What frantic.....averted*—The nominative is "atoning drops," 'hands' is in the objective case. The meaning is :—God's mercy (atoning drops) has never turned aside from (been withdrawn from) any man who has prayed for mercy with outstretched hands.

**Or**, the construction may be this: *hands*—nominative. *Drops*—object. In that case the meaning becomes : "What man who has prayed for mercy with outstretched hands has failed to get that mercy?" *Averted*—failed to receive; failed to be blest with. In both the cases the meaning is the same.

*Them*—the atoning drops.

S.P.—22.

*What tears.....deserted*—The desire for God's mercy is so prevalent in man, and God is so kind that nobody can be deserted by God.

**St. 13. Substance**—The idea that God deserts man is as absurd as that God can desert Himself. No sin can intervene between God and man who is the child of God. The cry that man is forsaken by God does not find any echo in man's breast—in the world.

*God could separate.....rather*—Just as God cannot separate Himself from His own essence, so also He cannot forsake man who is a part of Him.

*Adam's sins*—The original sin committed by Adam, the first man, in disobeying the commands of God and plucking off the fruit of knowledge.

*Have swept—could* have swept ; could have stood between ; could create a cleavage between.

*The righteous Son*—Christ who fulfilled the commands of God and died for the sake of man. *Adam* is the disobedient (undutiful) son of God. According to the Bible, Adam was the first man, he sinned against God and fell, and all men have inherited sin from him.

*Father*—God.

*And Adam's sin.....Father*—It is absurd to think that the original sin committed by the first man (Adam) separated God from those other men who are His dutiful children.

*Emmanuel's—i.e., Christ's.*

*Emmanuel's cry*—the pathetic cry of Christ who when being crucified fancied that he was forsaken by God. The **allusion** is to the gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 27, verse 46 :

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani* ? that is to say, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me* ?"

*His universe*—the universe of God.

*Went up 'single, etc.*—nobody responded to it ; it was not echoed back. This shows that man can never entertain the idea that he has been deserted by God. It is foolish to think that God, our All-merciful Father gives up His children.

*My God, I am forsaken*—These were the words of Emmanuel (Christ) on the Cross :

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?"

**St. 14. Substance**—It is the high will of God that no man should feel forsaken by Him. Madness may mar hopes, but it can never prevent the fulfilment of these hopes. Cowper in his madness felt that he was deserted by God : he could not hope for salvation. All the same his former hopes of salvation were fulfilled and he was saved.

*Holy's lips*—the lips of God (here Christ), the most Holy. *His lost creation*—The sinful creatures of this world.

*That, of the lost.....desolation*—no man should ever think that he is forsaken by God, however sinful he may be. No sinner is forsaken by God. *Desolation*—forsaking.

*It went.....desolation*—**N. B.** From the lips of Christ on the Cross went up the cry, 'single and echoless': "My God, I am forsaken!" And it went up from the lips of the most holy Christ who redeemed all men from the effects of their sins—so that no sinner should be forsaken by God, should have to use the words 'I am forsaken.'

*Marring hope*—destroying all hopes of recovery. • *Should mar not hope's fruition*—cannot stand in the way of man's salvation. *I*—the poetess, Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

*His rapture*—the ecstatic joy of Cowper when the knowledge dawned on him that he was not forsaken by God.

### Important Questions with Hints for Answers.

Q. 1. Give the substance of Mrs. Browning's reflections over Cowper's grave. How does she deduce that no man is forsaken by God ?

Ans. (See Substance)

Q. 2. State what you know of Cowper's madness.

Ans. (See Notes St. 2).

Q. 3. Explain fully the following passages :—

(a) O poets, from a maniac's tongue.....smiling ( St. 2 ).

(b) And though in blindness.....created ( St. 8 ).

Reflecting over the life of Cowper Mrs Browning says that a close study of Cowper's life points out the supreme fact that man cannot do without God. No doubt Cowper was stricken with temporary insanity ; no doubt for some time he lost faith in God ; yet God did not forsake him. The All-merciful supplied what the mad poet required though God's providence was not recognised. The poet turned to Nature and was refreshed by her soothing sights and sounds ; he was also loved by his dear friends. But neither man nor Nature could satisfy his soul's yearning. Its craving could be satisfied by God alone.

(c) *Like a sick child.....save him.* (Sts. 9 & 10).

Mrs. Browning compares the dawning again of faith and hope the mind of Cowper to the return of consciousness to a child suffering from high fever. The child suffering from delirium cries for his mother and fails to recognise her though she is seated by his side and is bending over him and kissing him. But when the fever is gone the child's joy knows no bounds when he sees the affectionate mother tending him with fond care. So it was also with Cowper. In his madness he could not recognise the hand of Providence (God) though the merciful Providence was always by his side. But when life's fitful fever was over (*i.e.*, after his death) Cowper perceived that God had been always watching over him and had never deserted him. Indeed how could He desert man for whose redemption He died on the Cross—as Christ ?

(d) Deserted.....deserted. (St. 12)

(e) Yea, once, Emmanuel's.....forsaken. (St. 13)

# APPENDIX A.

## A SHORT NOTE ON RHETORIC AND PROSODY.

### 1. RHETORIC.

**Rhetoric** is the art of impressive speaking or writing by the use of high-flown language consisting of figures of speech or ornaments.

A *figure of speech* is a deviation from the ordinary use of words, with a view to increasing their effect. *e.g.*,

That man is a *pillar* of the state

Here the word 'pillar' is used in a figurative sense, and signifies 'support.'

The following are the main figures used in general writing :—

1. **A Simile** is a comparison *fully* expressed in words—it consists in giving *formal* expression to the likeness said to exist between two different objects or events. The words commonly used to express this likeness are *as, like, as—so. e.g.*,

Errors, *like straws* upon the surface flow ;

He that would search for pearls must dive below.—*Dryden.*

2. **A Metaphor** is an implied or condensed simile. *e.g.*,

Our eldest son is the *star* of the family.

**N.B.** Notice that every metaphor can be turned into a simile.

(a) **Mixed or Confused Metaphor**—Sometimes two or more metaphors are found close together in the same sentence. This is a defect in composition. *e.g.*,

(i) I *bridle* in my struggling muse with pain,  
That longs to *launch* into a bolder *strain*.



Notice that in the above example the poet compares his muse first to a horse, secondly, to a ship, and lastly to a musical instrument. Thus three ideas have been confused together in a couple of lines.

(ii) To take arms against a *sea* of troubles.

(b) **Personal Metaphor**—A metaphor is said to be *personal* when it speaks of inanimate objects as if they were living persons, e.g., a treacherous calm : a sullen sky.

**3. Allegory**—An *allegory* is a series of symbols where more is meant than meets the ear. In an allegory there is always a deeper meaning behind the surface meaning. The best example of an Allegory is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

(a) *Fables* are imaginary stories about beasts and birds written for some instruction, e.g., *Æsop's Fables*.

(b) *A Parable* is a biblical story told to instruct somebody, e.g., the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*, the parable of the ten Virgins, etc.

**4. Personification.** By this figure of speech we ascribe intelligence and personality to inanimate objects, e.g., *a smiling morn*; *the frowning rock*. Notice that such personifications are personal metaphors too.

(a) **Pathetic Fallacy.** This is a stronger kind of personification by which an author is carried away by his feelings and attributes human feelings to inanimate objects, e.g.,

Every flower enjoys the air it breathes.—*Wordsworth*.

(b) **Apostrophe.** By this figure the speaker addresses some inanimate object or some abstract idea as if it were a living person, or some absent or dead person as if he were present or living. e.g.,

(i) *O Caledonia ! stern and wild*  
Meet nurse for a poetic child !—*Scott*.

(ii) *Millon, thou shouldst be living at this hour, etc.*—*Wordsworth*.

**5. Metonymy** is the substitution of the thing named for the thing meant. There are various cases of metonymy :—

- (a) The sign for the thing signified :—

He succeeded to the *crown* (i. e., monarchy).

The hero's harp, the lover's lute (i.e., epic poetry and lyric poetry.)—Byron's *Isles of Greece*.

- (b) The instrument for the agent :—

The *pen* is stronger than the *sword*—i. e., those who use the pen (i. e., writers) have more influence than those who use the sword (soldiers).

- (c) The container for the thing contained :—

He drank the *cup* (i. e., the contents of the cup).

- (d) An effect for a cause, or a cause for an effect :—

The bright *death* (i. e., sword) quivered at the victim's throat.—Tennyson. Grey hairs should be respected.

- (e) An author for his works :—

I have read *Homer* (i. e., the works of Homer).

**6. Synecdoche** is the understanding of one thing by means of another. Like Metonymy, Synecdoche has also got several cases.

- (a) Part for the whole, species for genus :—

All *hands* at work, the royal work grows warm.—Dryden.  
A fleet of fifty *sail* = fifty ships.

The *hand* that mocked them, and the *heart* that fed.  
(Shelley's *Ozymandias*).

- (b) Whole for the part or genus for the species :—

He is a poor *creature* (i. e., man).

- (c) Concrete for the abstract :—

There is a mixture of the *tiger* and the *ape* in the character of a Frenchman.—Voltaire.

All the *mother* (i. e., motherly feelings) rose in her breast.  
I hate the *Viceroy*, I love the *man*.

## (d) Abstract for the concrete :—

All the *rank* and *fashion* came out to see the sight.  
Where perhaps some *beauty* (i. e., beautiful woman)  
lies. (*L'Allegro*).

## (e) Material for the thing made :—

A foeman worthy of his *steel* (i. e., sword).

(f) There is a special kind of synecdoche in which an individual is substituted for the whole class. This figure has got a special name—*Antonomasia*, e. g.,

A Daniel (i.e., a very wise judge like Daniel) is come to judgment.—*Shakespeare*.

He is the Newton of this country (i. e., the greatest mathematician and astronomer).

**7. Transferred Epithet or Hypallage** is a figure of speech in which the qualifying adjective epithet is transferred from a person to a thing, e. g.,

The ploughman homeward plods his *weary* way. (*Gray's*  
He lay all night on his *sleepless* pillow. (*Elegy*)  
Jonson's *learned* sock (*L'Allegro*)  
(i.e., the comedy of the learned poet Ben Jonson.)

**8. Climax** This is a Greek word meaning a ladder. By the figure *climax* the sense is made to rise by successive steps to what is more and more important and impressive :—

He *walks*, he *leaps*, he *runs* with joy.—*Cowper*.

It is an *outrage* to *bind* a Roman citizen ; to *scourge* him is an *atrocious crime* ; to *put him to death* is almost a *parricide* ; but to *crucify* him, what shall I call it ?

**Anti-climax or Bathos** is the opposite of climax and signifies a ludicrous descent from the higher to the lower :—

"Here, thou great Anna ! whom three realms obey,  
Dost sometimes *counsel* take—and sometimes *tea*.—*Pope*.  
(He) in the course of one revolving moon  
*Was lawyer, statesman, fiddler and buffoon*.—*Dryden*.

**9. Antithesis** is the setting of one thing against another. This figure implies simple contrast.

*I love him but he hates me.*

*He can bribe, but he cannot seduce.*

*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.*

**10. Epigram** is closely allied to Antithesis.

By this figure words are used which apparently contradict each other. The language of epigram is remarkable for its brevity; and an epigram is in the nature of a short proverb.

*The child is father of the man—Wordsworth.*

*Language is the art of concealing thought.*

*Beauty when unadorned is adorned the most.*

**11. Oxymoron** is also a kind of Antithesis in which two apparently contradictory epithets are used, e.g., *noble savage*.

*Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.—Shelley.*

*In her sweetest, saddest plight,*

*Smoothing the rugged brow of night. —Il Penseroso.*

*With wanton heed and giddy cunning. —L'Allegro.*

**12. Interrogation.** "This is a rhetorical mode of affirming or denying something more strongly and emphatically than could be done in ordinary language."

*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spot?*

*Who is here so base that would be a bondman?*

**13. Exclamation** is the strong expression of some feeling.

*O what a fall was there, my countrymen!*

**14. Pun.** It consists in a play on the various meanings of a word; and is used for jest only. e.g.,

*Can the leopard change its spots?—*

*Yes; the leopard changes its spots, whenever it goes from one spot to another.*

**15. Irony or Sarcasm.** This figure of speech "consists in making damaging remarks about some person or thing, in words, which, if they were taken literally, would imply commendation. It is expected, however, that their intended meaning will be understood from the sneering accent or manner of the speaker, or from the well-known character of the person or thing referred to." *Irony* is stronger than *Sarcasm*.

Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
And Brutus is an *honourable* man.—*Shakespeare*.

**16. Litotes**—is the use of a negative to indicate a strong affirmative in the opposite direction.

He is *no* dullard (—decidedly clever).

A genius of *no mean* order. A citizen of *no mean* city. He is *no* fool, etc.

**17. Alliteration**—consists in the repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of two or more words. *e.g.*,

By apt Alliteration's artful aid—*Pope*.

A load of learning lumbering in his head.—*Pope*.

A longing lingering look behind.—*Gray*.

**18. Onomatopoeia** is a figure in which sound is made to echo the sense.

And clattering flints battered with clanging hoofs, etc.—*Tennyson*.

**19. Periphrasis or Circumlocution** consists in expressing some idea in a round-about way.

The animal that browses on thistles (i.e., an ass).

The cup that cheers but not inebriates (i.e., the cup of tea).

**20. Euphemism** is a kind of circumlocution. By this figure we speak in gentle and favourable terms of some person, object, or event, which is ordinarily seen in a less pleasing light. *e.g.*,

The Cape of Good Hope :

A light-fingered gentleman (i.e., a thief).

**N. B.** There are some other minor figures which we need not take notice of, because they occur so seldom in the language.

## II. Prosody or the Laws of Versification.

*Prosody* treats of the laws of metre or Versification.

*Metre* is the rhythmical arrangement of syllables in verse.

Versification depends upon two main factors

- (a) The accentuation of syllables,
- (b) The number of accented syllables in a line.

A **foot** is a specific combination of accented and unaccented syllables. It consists generally of two or three syllables. Ordinarily, the number of syllables to a foot is not less than two or more than three.

There are four principal metres in English:—

- (a) **Iambus**, (b) **Trochee**, (c) **Anapaest**, and (d) **Dactyl**.

(a) An **Iambus** consists of feet, each of which is made up of two syllables of which the first is unaccented, and the second is accented, e.g., Ap-pea'r—

(b) A **Trochee** is just the opposite of an iambus. A trochaic foot consists of one accented syllable followed by an unaccented one. e.g., up'-per.

(c) An **Anapaest**—or an anapaestic foot consists of three syllables of which the first two are unaccented, and the third is accented, e.g., Re-ap-pea'r.

(d) A **Dactyl** is the opposite of an anapaest. A Dactylic foot consists of three syllables of which the first one is accented and the last two unaccented.

To **scan** a line means to divide it into its several feet and say what kind of feet they are and how many of them there are in a line. Take, for example, the first line of Gray's *Elegy*. Properly accented the line would stand thus:—

The cur' | few toll's | the knel'1 | of part' | ing da'y.

Here we have a line consisting of five feet, each of which is an iambus. The line is, therefore, an iambic pentameter.

## I. Iambic Metre.

"The Iambic metre is the prevailing measure or metre in English poetry and is more extensively used than any other. The number of Iambic feet in an Iambic line may vary from two to seven."

- (a) Iambic dimeter containing two Iambic feet in a line—e.g.,

With rav' | ished ears'  
The mon' | arch hears' | etc.

- (b) Iambic trimeter containing three Iambic feet in a line—e.g.,

Thy wa'y, | not min'e | O Lo'rd |  
How ev' | er dark' | it be'.

- (c) Iambic tetrameter containing four Iambic feet in a line.

This is very common, e.g.,  
The way' | was lon'g | the nigh't | was co'ld.  
The min' | 'strel was | in firm' | and ol'd.

- (d) Iambic pentameter or five-footed line.

This is very common in English poetry, e.g.,  
The cur' | few tol's | the knel'l | of part' | ing da'y.

Gray's *Elegy* and other important poems—poems written in blank verse such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and all English sonnets—are written in this metre.

- (e) Iambic hexameter or the Alexandrine containing six Iambic feet in a line, e.g.,

Shake a't | the bal'e | ful bla'st, | the sig' | nal of' | the wa'r

- (f) Iambic heptameter containing seven Iambic feet in a line (also called the ballad metre), e.g.,

Atten'd | all y'e | who' wi'sh | to he'ar | our no' | ble En'g |  
land's prais'e |

## 2. The Trochaic Metre.

The trochee is just the opposite of iambus. A trochaic line (like an Iambic line) may be of various lengths.

Examples of the Trochaic metre :

- (a) Whe'n the | Briti'sh | war'rior | quee'n  
 Bleed'ing | fro'm the | Ro'-man | ro'ds.  
 Sought' with | an'in | dig'nant | mi'en  
 Coun'sel | o'her | cou'ntry's | go'd—*Cowper*.
- (b) Tell'me | not' in | mourn'ful | num'bers  
 Life'is | bu't an | empty | drea'm etc.

The above two examples are the most common forms of trochaic verse. Notice that most of the lines written in the trochaic metre are catalectic, *i.e.*, ending in an imperfect or truncated foot. It is interesting to note also that such truncated trochaic lines can also be scanned as iambic lines (Acephalous), *e.g.*, a line like "Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee" (L'Allegro) may be scanned as—

Ha'ste, thee | Nym'ph and | bring with | thee  
 (Trochaic tetrameter catalectic)

Or as—

Ha'ste, | thee Nym'ph, | and bring | with the'e |  
 (Acephalous iambic tetrameter.)

### 3. The Anapaestic Metre.

In an Anapaestic line the accent falls on the third, sixth, and ninth syllables.

The first two syllables, and those coming between the third and sixth or between the sixth and ninth are unaccented. "The most common form of this metre is the trimeter consisting of three anapaestic feet *e.g.*,

I am mon' | arch of all' | I sur-vey'  
 My r'ight | there is none' | to dispute';  
 From the cen' | tre all round' | to the sea'  
 I am lord' | of the bird' | and the brute'—*Cowper*.

N. B. The student is to notice that the first foot of the second line is an Iambus, and not an Anapaest. Such a mixture is very common in the anapaestic metre.



#### 4. The Dactyllic Metre.

A Dactyl is the converse of an Anapæst: hence in a Dactyllic line the first and the fourth syllables, etc., are accented. The Dactyllic metre is however very uncommon in English poetry. An example may be given below:—

One' more un- | fo'rtunate  
 We'ary of | brea'th  
 Ras'hly im- | po'rtunate  
 Gon'e to' her | dea'th  
 Ta'ke her up | ten'derly  
 Lif't her with | car'e  
 Fa'shioned so | sle'nderly  
 You'ng and so | fai'r.

Alternate lines of dactyllic dimeter and dactyllic dimeter catalectic

#### Some special rules which the student should know.

1. In scanning a line two short syllables coming together are often pronounced as if they were one for the sake of the metre.

2. Sometimes, to reduce two syllables to one, a consonant or even a whole syllable is omitted.

3. The vowel in the definite article—'the'—coming before a word beginning with a vowel is often slurred over.

4. When two vowel sounds belonging to different words come together, they are often slurred over and pronounced as one.

5. Very often in English poetry a mixture of two different metres occurs. Iambus is often mixed with Anapæst, and Trochee with Dactyl. Iambus and Trochee also are often mixed together.

6. Hypermetrical or extra syllables often occur, especially in the blank verse of Milton and Shakespeare.

7. Sometimes two accented syllables form a foot. Such a foot is called a **Spondee**. But this is not one of the feet recognised in English poetry. It occurs only as a mixture.

8. Sometimes the opposite of the above happens; two unaccented syllables forming a foot. Such a foot is called a **Pyrrhic**.

9. *In scanning a line depend upon your musical ear, and first of all find out the accented syllables in the line.* The number of accents would determine the number of feet in the line.

A sound scansion depends upon a sound ear. So train your ear first. Read loudly, scan the lines you read in your Selections and you will become an adept in scansion.

## Appendix B.

### ON THE STUDY OF POETRY.

#### What is Poetry ?

*We all know what poetry is, yet most of us would be quite at a loss were we asked to define it.* The life of poetry is so protean,—it has so many shapes, and its colours are so varied—that an exact definition of poetry can never be given. All our attempts to define it adequately would but be futile. *In the first place we know that poetry is very different from prose. It has got metre which prose has not.* But mere metre would not make poetry. Next, poetry has got a certain kind of rhythmical arrangement of words which is its very life. Yet mere music would not make poetry—good prose is musical too. Still, however, *rhythm is an essential characteristic of poetry*; without rhythmical music which touches all the chords of the human heart, poetry would be mere versified prose and nothing more.

We have said above that no exact definition of poetry can be given. Yet from time to time attempts have been made by distinguished literary men to define poetry. We shall quote below some of these well-known definitions. The student will see that no two definitions are alike. All these definitions must be treated as mere attempts to give a rough idea of poetry and nothing more.

*Dr. Johnson defines poetry as "metrical composition : the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason."* Mill defines poetry as "the thought and words in which emotion spontaneously embodies itself." According to Carlyle poetry is nothing but "musical thoughts." "Poetry," says Shelley, "in a general sense may be defined as the expression of the imagination." Coleridge defines poetry as the antithesis of Science, having for its immediate object pleasure, not truth. Wordsworth differs from Coleridge and calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" and "the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all science." According to Matthew Arnold Poetry is "nothing less than the most perfect speech of man," that in which he

comes nearest to being able to utter the truth; "*it is a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.*" Pope defines poetry as "*the rhythmic creation of beauty.*" Professor Courthope speaks of poetry thus: *It is the art of producing pleasure by the just expression of imaginative thought and feeling in metrical language.*" Mr. Watts Dunton defines it as "*the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language*"

It will be seen that none of the above definitions are comprehensive in character. Suggestive, one and all, they doubtless are. Yet they are all distracting in their variety. This is because the subject was approached from many different points of view, and these definitions are important because they throw a flood of light upon the subject, and help us to understand what poetry is.

Let us now come to a more easy ground\* and discuss the characteristics and the requisites of good poetry. What are some of the most essential elements of poetry or poetical composition?

Now the term 'poetical,' is generally used in the sense of emotional and imaginative. All literature is an interpretation of life. By the poetical interpretation of life, therefore, we mean a treatment of its facts, experiences, problems, in which the emotional and the imaginative elements predominate. The

*chief characteristic of poetry then is that whatever it touches in life it relates to our feelings and passions, while at the same time by the exercise of imaginative power it both transfigures existing realities and "gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."* But though *emotion and imagination are the essential qualities of poetry*, the mere presence of them, even in the highest degree, is itself not sufficient to constitute poetry. Imagination and feeling exist in good prose—poetic prose—too. Still such prose would be called prose and not poetry. Of course there is much "poetry" which is merely "prosaic," just as, there is much "prose" which is markedly "poetical." But still a dividing line between prose and poetry exists. *It is the form of poetry that differentiates it from prose. This form is metre or regularly rhythmical language.*

2. Metre.

Without this we have the spirit of poetry without its externals; and with this we may have the externals

of poetry without its spirit. Good poetry must therefore be a harmonious union of both *imagination and feeling* (constituting the spirit of poetry) and *metre* (constituting the externals of poetry). Metre is regarded by Arnold as a part of the perfection of poetry. It, like music, makes in itself a profound appeal to our feelings. Merely to arrange words in a definitely rhythmical order is to endow them, as by some secret magic, with a new and subtle emotional power. Metre must therefore be regarded as one of the most essential elements of poetry. *To sum up, the chief characteristics of poetry are emotion and imagination combined with metre or rhythmical arrangements of words.*

### Poetry as an interpretation of life.

We have said above that all literature is an expression of life. Poetry being one of the aspects of literature must necessarily be an expression of life. A poet is a great seer. He sees life in a light in which we fail to see it; and it is his mission to present this aspect of life to us. Herein the poet differs from the scientist. It is the avowed vocation of the scientist to know the truth and to let others know of it. He is a man who cares for facts alone and examines them in the dry light of reason. But a poet is something more. He sees the facts and phenomena of life and Nature, no doubt; but he adds to these bare facts and phenomena an ideal light—"a light that was never on sea or land, the consecration and the poet's dream." Poetry, therefore, begins, as Leigh Hunt well puts it, where matter of fact or of science ceases to be such. The gardener would call a lily, a lily. This is a matter of fact. The botanist pronounces it to be of the order of *Hexandria monogynia*. This is a matter of science. When Spenser, the poet, calls it the lady of the garden, we begin to have a poetical sense of its fairness and grace. Ben Jonson, another poet, calls the lily 'the plant and flower of light'; and poetry then shows us the beauty of the flower in all its mystery and splendour. But it is not to be assumed that because a poet's principal concern is with the beauty and mystery of things, the human interest and meaning of the things with which he deals, he is at liberty to misrepresent things. Far from this. It is true, no doubt, that the poet gives us an intimate sense of things and of our relation with them by touching them with imagination and feeling, and linking them.

*Poetry and  
science.*

with our own life. Nevertheless it is required of the poet that his vision of the world should still be a clear and steady vision and that absolute fidelity to facts should be his guiding principle in all his renderings of facts. All poetry has to be tested by this criterion of fidelity to facts. *Good poetry would thus be not the antithesis of science but a complement of it.*

*The chief element of poetry is its revealing power.* As Hudson says, "Poetry opens our eyes to sensuous beauties and spiritual

*Poetry and life* meanings in the worlds of human experience and nature to which otherwise we should remain blind." There are few of us who have not some endowment of poetic insight and feeling, some measure of "the vision and the faculty divine." But in very many cases such poetic capacity in us is cramped and crippled by the ordinary conditions of life. It is the true poet, in whom the power of seeing and feeling the sensuous beauty and spiritual meaning of things exists in a pre-eminent degree, who has been gifted also with the power of so expressing and interpreting what he sees and feels as to quicken our own imagination and sympathies and to make us see and feel with him. The poet is thus not only a seer of divine beauty in this universe but an interpreter of that beauty as well. This is why Carlyle writes of the poets as "gifted to discern the God-like mysteries of God's Universe," and this is why we may describe every true poet, as Arnold once described Wordsworth, as "a priest to us all of the wonder and bloom of the World."

We thus see that poetry covers our relation with life at almost every point. It appeals to nearly all our moods and finds its subject-matter in whatever will yield poetic beauty and meaning. *A poet is also a teacher of man*; only he should see that his teachings do not become mere didacticism. It is not the presence of didacticism that mars poetry; it is the poet's inability to give to his ideas a poetic form and setting that mars his poetry and makes it merely didactic in character.

### Kinds of poetry.

Broadly speaking, poetry may be divided into two classes—*subjective and objective*. By *subjective poetry*—we mean the *poetry of personal expression*. It is "poetry in which the poet goes down into himself and finds his inspiration and his subjects in his own

*experiences, thoughts and feelings.*" It is the poetry of self-delineation and self-expression. By *objective poetry*—we mean *the poetry in which the poet hides himself from the reader. It is "like poetry in which the poet goes out of himself, mingles with the action and passion of the world without," and deals with what he discovers there with little reference to his, own individuality.* This kind of poetry is highly impersonal in character.

### 1. Subjective poetry.

Subjective poetry again, falls into different sub-groups. First of all we have got the **Lyric** *in which the poet is principally occupied with himself.* Lyric poetry is almost unlimited in range and variety, for it may touch nearly all aspects of experience. Thus we have (a) the convivial or bacchanalian lyric; (b) the lyric which treats of the lighter things of life, as in the so-called *verse de societe*; (c) the lyric of love in all its phases, and with all its attendant hopes and longings, joys and sorrows (e.g., Wordsworth's Lucy poems, and his lines on his wife; Byron's *Thyrza*, etc.); (d) the lyric of patriotism, e.g., Moore's *Pro Patria Mori*, Rupert Brooke's poems, etc.; (e) the lyric of religious emotion such as the poems of Christina Rossetti; (f) miscellaneous lyrics which it is unnecessary to attempt to tabulate. *The main quality of lyric poetry is that it must be emotional and that this emotion should be genuine,* the language and imagery of the lyric must also be characterised not only by beauty and vividness, but also by propriety—i.e., the harmony which in all art is required between the subject and its medium.

There is another kind of subjective or personal poetry which we might call *meditative* or *philosophic* poetry. Here too emotional qualities and the beauty, vividness and propriety of language and imagery, have still to be considered. But in addition to all these qualities, the substantial value of the thought itself has also to be taken into consideration. Tennyson's *Palace of Art*, and *Vision of Sin* may be referred to as illustrations of this kind of meditative or philosophical poetry.

Next comes the *Ode* which may be defined as *a rimed lyric often in the form of an address, generally dignified or exalted in subject, feeling, and style.* In structure the Ode may be *regular*, like Collin's *Ode to Evening*, Shelley's *West Wind*, Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*; or *irregular*, like Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, Wordsworth's *Ode on the*

*Intimations of Immortality and Tennyson's Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.*

We now come to one of the most important divisions of subjective, or personal poetry, viz. *the Elegy*, *The Elegy*.

In its simplest form like Tennyson's "Break, break, break," this is a brief lyric of mourning, or direct utterance of personal bereavement and sorrow. *Absolute sincerity of emotion and expression is the chief quality of elegiac poetry*. From its simplest form the Elegy has grown into a memorial containing the poet's tribute to some great man (very often a personal friend), and often a study of his life and character, with reminiscences and thoughts suggested by them. Spenser's *Astrophel* (lament for Sir Philip Sidney); Milton's *Lycidas* (lament for his friend Edward King); Matthew Arnold's *Rugby Chapel* and *Thyrsis*, are examples of this kind of elegy. Often too, the philosophic and speculative elements become predominant in an elegy sometimes even to the total subordination of the purely personal element, and then the Elegy becomes a vehicle of expression of the poet's philosophy of life. Shelley's *Adonais* and Browning's *La Saisiaz* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, are cases in point.

One particular type of elegy calls for separate mention. It is the pastoral type, in which the poet expresses his sorrow under the similitude of a shepherd mourning for a companion. This form had its origin among the Sicilian Greeks, and it passed into modern European literatures at the time of the Renaissance. It has often been employed by English poets from Spenser to Matthew Arnold.

But *the term elegy has long been broadly used for any poem highly reflective in character, and of a markedly melancholy strain*. One of the most famous of English poems—Gray's *Elegy written in a country churchyard*—shows this extension of meaning. It is a lament for the poor forefathers of the village, and is highly reflective in character. The personal element comes at the last though in a disguised form.

*Another kind of subjective poetry is the sonnet. It is highly personal in character.* As we have said much about the sonnet earlier we shall stop here only barely mentioning it as one of the sub-groups of personal poetry.



There are other kinds of subjective poetry like the *Epistle*, and the *Satire*, but they do not require particular treatment here.

### „ Objective poetry.

Let us now pass from subjective poetry to objective (or impersonal) poetry. *The main feature of this kind of poetry is that it deals directly, not with the thoughts and feelings of the poet, but with the outer world of passion and action.*

Such impersonal poetry naturally divides itself into **two groups** (A) **Narrative** and (B) **Dramatic**. But narrative poetry and dramatic poetry have their subdivisions too. We shall mention these subdivisions here.

**(A) Narrative poetry.** (i) The first kind of narrative poetry that attracts our attention is the *Ballad or short story in verse*. This form rose spontaneously in the evolution of poetic art. A ballad properly means a song sung accompanied with dancing. *The main characteristics of ballad poetry are rapidity of movement, delicacy of imagination, weaving together of nature and human emotion, exquisite melody, and tenderness of feeling.* There is often a supernatural touch in the ballad. Many ballads have immense dramatic power and wonderful metrical beauty. The modern ballad is a literary improvement of the traditional form.

As illustrations of modern ballad poetry we may mention Doyle's *The Loss of the Birkenhead* and *the Red Thread of Honour*; Kingsley's *The Sands of Dee*; Scott's *Eve of St. John*; Tennyson's *Revenge*, etc.

(ii) From the ballad, or story poem, we pass to the longer *narrative in verse*, viz., the *epic*. *The subject-matter of epic poetry is the life history of some mythical hero.* The Epic makes free use of the supernatural. But what distinguishes it from other kinds of poetry is the dignity and sublimity, the loftiness and majesty of its style. *The Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer, the Æneid of Virgil, Milton's Paradise Lost, Dante's Divina Commedia* are the noblest types of epic poetry. Milton's style is the sublimest among the English poets as the student may well see from the fragment he has got to read—*The Invocation to Light*. If the subject-matter of

the epic is not dignified, the epic becomes a Mock-Epic or Mock *Mock Epic*. In such a poem the machinery and conventions of the regular epic are employed in connection with trivial themes and thus turned to the purposes of parody or burlesque,—the finest example of this form of poetry is Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

(iii) Another division of narrative poetry is the Metrical *Metrical Romance*. Romance. Spenser's *Fairy Queen* ; Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion*, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, are examples of this kind of poetry. There are also other kinds of narrative poetry which it is unnecessary here to mention.

(B) **Dramatic Poetry.** The last division of objective poetry is the Dramatic. *Dramatic poetry is highly objective in character. In it the poet merges himself in his character or characters* and does not, as in subjective or ordinary narrative poetry, describe or relate in his own person. The dramatist completely hides himself in his dramas. *The thoughts and sentiments put in the mouths of his characters in his dramas must not be regarded as the thoughts and sentiments of the author* ;—for example, the view of life taken by Jacques in *As you Like It* (the Seven Ages of Man) must not be taken as the view of Shakespeare. A dramatic poem appears often in the form of dialogues ; sometimes however, it appears as a monologue as in Tennyson's *Maud*. The Elizabethan Age was the best age for the development of dramatic poetry. That age was not critical like the modern. People in the good old age of Elizabeth cared only for action and not for criticism. Hence dramatic poetry flourished in that age. The modern Age is however so critical that it has rendered the production of a good drama an almost impossible task. In the modern age poets not only wish to depict but to criticise as well. Hence the lyric or subjective poetry has become the predominant form of modern English poetry. Dramatic poetry appears only as dramatic lyrics which are both subjective and objective in character.

### The Study of Poetry.

We are now in a position to discuss the question—*How to study poetry?* There are various ways of approaching poetry. We may, for example, take up the work of a single poet ; and

our business then would be to analyse the contents of his writings and discuss the chief features of his art. We may also examine his literary ancestry and affiliations—*i.e.* the authors who were his masters, or to whom he is related by his style and method. We shall, in that case, have to consider his relations with the spirit and movements of his time. After this, we may pass from him to the other poets of his age. This is one of the ways of studying poetry. Another way would be to make an historical study of some great body of poetry following its ebb and flow from epoch to epoch, and the rise and decline of schools, methods, and traditions. In that case, we have to note every significant change in subject matter, spirit and style, and explain all these as far as we can. A third method would be to limit our field of enquiry, and to devote our attention to the history of some one great poetic form, such as the drama or the epic or the elegy, and pass through the whole course of its evolution and transformation in different literatures and at different times. There is still another method. We may select some special theme—say the treatment of nature in poetry and make this the basis of our study. Even here we shall have to discuss many points apparently outside the subject in hand.

These are some of the ways in which we may systematise our study of poetry, and make it interesting and at the same time profitable. *But in every case it is our prime duty to understand and appreciate the poet and not to quarrel with him. We should approach him with a reverent spirit.* This faculty of poetic appreciation is more important than all the acquisitions of scholarship. At the same time it is our duty not to waste our valuable time on trash.

### Main currents in English Poetry.

Ever since the birth of English poetry in Chaucer, it has undergone a great deal of change. *Broadly speaking, English poetry may be divided into four distinct stages:—(a) The Age of Shakespeare or Elizabethan poetry; (b) The Age of Milton or 17th century Poetry; (c) The Age of Pope or 18th century Poetry; and (d) The Age of Wordsworth and after or the Romantic Poetry of the 19th and 20th centuries.* Let us discuss the characteristics of English Poetry in each of these periods.

Elizabethan poetry or early Romantic Poetry is "marked by a wide range of style; from simplicity expressed in a language hardly yet broken into verse, through the pastoral fancies and Italian conceits of the strictly Elizabethan times:—to the passionate reality of Shakespeare." Yet, a general uniformity in tone prevails. As we read the poetry of this age, we never fail to observe *the natural sweetness of the verse* and the single-hearted straight-forwardness of the thoughts. Again *the subject-matter of poetry in this age was but limited*;—limited to the many phases of one particular passion only—the passion of love. In Shakespeare and Drummond, however, the 'purple light of Love' was tempered by a spirit of sterner reflection. *The Age was uncritical in its tendency, and could thus produce the highest kind of objective Art—viz.—the Drama.*

We now pass from the Age of Shakespeare to the Age of Milton, i.e., the poetry of the latter eighty years of the seventeenth century. This period contains the close of the early English poetical style and the commencement of the Modern. In Milton, whose genius dominates here as Shakespeare's in the former period, we see the crown and consummation of the literary qualities of the earlier period; in Dryden we mark the beginning of the new Era in poetry. The poetry of Milton and Dryden exhibits the wider and grander range which years of experience and the political and religious struggle of the time conferred on poetry. *Poets now give expression to political feeling, to religious thought, and to a high philosophic statesmanship.* In Milton and Marvel, too, we notice the first *noble attempts at a pure description of nature.* No doubt that towards the close of this period sentiments in some poets became somewhat artificial, "yet the far bolder and wider scope which poetry took between 1620 and 1700, and the successful efforts then made to gain greater clearness in expression, in their results have been no slight compensation." *The greatest achievement of this period was the production of Milton's Paradise Lost.*

When we pass from the Age of Shakespeare and the Age of Milton, to the Age of Pope or the 18th century, we seem to pass from a fairy land to a desert. *The 18th century was not at all fit for the production of 'Classical' poetry.*

good poetry. It was highly critical in tendency. The greatest poet of this 'Age was Pope who set up a school of poetry which was highly artificial in character. He cared more for form and polish than for the spirit. He thought that poetry could be produced mechanically. He made certain rules which were carried to excess by his followers. The result was the production of a school of poetry highly artificial and defective in subject-matter to which the name 'classical' has been falsely given. Nature was neglected. Man was regarded as the prime subject of poetry ; yet here, too, Pope made a distinction. He thought that only the civilized, and polished people—the aristocracy—could be the adequate subject of poetry. The short and simple annals of the poor were neglected. Personification for the sake of personification, undue emphasis, circumlocution in the use of words—all these and such as these—were copiously used by the poets of this era. In course of time these faults were carried to such an excess that a re-action came as it was bound to come. But even the re-actionary poets could never free themselves wholly from the dominating influence of Pope. The poems of Gray and Cowper are good illustrations of this.

We have said that the poetry of the 18th century was highly artificial. Against such artificial and soulless poetry a reaction was bound to come. It came faintly in the poetry of Gray, Crabbe and Cowper ; it came with much more markedness in the poetry of Blake and Burns ; but it came in the full tide of its glory and greatness in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats who in the early part of the 19th century, became the champions of free, natural poetry to which the name 'Romantic poetry' has been given. The term 'Romantic' means novel ; and this name was given to the poetry of the 19th century because it marked the dawning of a new era in poetry. If we examine the poetry of the early 19th century, we shall find three predominant characteristics so far as the subject-matter of poetry is concerned. First of all we find an increased range of literary activity, a greater variety in the song notes of the poets of this period. The joys and sorrows of the poor, individual liberty, and the vanishing hues of clouds and sunset, the majestic forms of mountains and oceans, England's romantic past,—all these and such as these form the subject matter of the poems of this period. Secondly, we notice a wider appreciation of Nature. Nature is no longer kept as a background, but

she becomes all in all in the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. Then again the poets of the early period looked upon nature as inanimate. *Wordsworth and Shelley, however, found a soul in Nature*, and regarded her as alive. Another feature of this appreciation of Nature is the love for mountains, oceans, tempests, torrents, in short of every wild aspect of Nature. Life in the country too, charmed the poets of this Romantic period, though it was so neglected by the poets of the 18th century. The third prominent characteristic of this period is *the influence of democratic spirit on the poetry of man*. In the age of Pope the aristocratic, cultured class was the only type of human being considered worthy of poetic treatment. But the romantic poets began to regard all men as equals. They adopted the doctrines of liberty, equality and fraternity. This is why the poetry of Wordsworth is characterised by a deep sympathy for the poorer classes of society. *The Romantic poets changed the diction of poetry too. They use simple, natural expressions pregnant with light and thought in place of the hackneyed conventional epithets of the school of Pope. They discarded the heroic couplet, and adopted all other metrical forms of poetic art—the sonnet, the Spenserian stanza, the ballad metre, blank verse, etc.*

*But above all romantic poetry is highly subjective in tendency. It is the poetry of self-expression, and is suitable for becoming the predominating form of poetry in the modern age which is highly analytical in its tendency.* This aspect of romanticism has left its stamp so indelibly upon the poetry of the modern period that it has settled, once for all, the future tendency of English poetry. It prevented Robert Browning from becoming a dramatist, and compelled him to produce only dramatic lyrics. The Victorian poets and the poets of the 20th century like Rupert Brooke, Davidson, Thompson and others took up this tendency and have carried it to such an extent that perhaps it will never be possible for future English poets to break the chain and produce purely objective poetry like the drama of the Elizabethan period.

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